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OF

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

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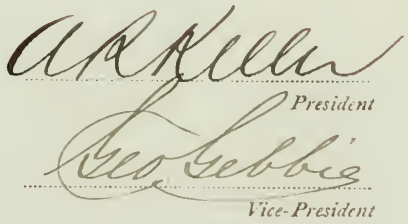

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"*I know him as I do my own right hand.*" — Page 115.

PHINEAS REDUX

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

VOLUME III.

"*I know him as I do my own right hand.*" — Page 115.

PHINEAS REDUX

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

VOLUME III.

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PHINEAS REDUX.

CHAPTER I.

THE DUCHESS TAKES COUNSEL.

PHINEAS FINN, when he had been thrice remanded before the Bow Street magistrate, and four times examined, was at last committed to be tried for the murder of Mr. Bonteen. This took place on Wednesday, May 19th, a fortnight after the murder. But during those fourteen days little was learned, or even surmised, by the police, in addition to the circumstances which had transpired at once. Indeed the delay, slight as it was, had arisen from a desire to find evidence that might affect Mr. Emilius, rather than with a view to strengthen that which did affect Phineas Finn. But no circumstances could be found tending in any way to add to the suspicion to which the converted Jew was made subject by his own character, and by the supposition that he would have been glad to get rid of Mr. Bonteen. He did not even attempt to run away,—for which attempt certain pseudo-facilities were put in his way by police ingenuity. But Mr. Emilius stood his ground and courted inquiry. Mr. Bonteen had been to him, he said, a very bitter, unjust, and cruel enemy. Mr. Bonteen had endeavoured to rob him of his dearest

wife;—had charged him with bigamy;—had got up false evidence in the hope of ruining him. He had undoubtedly hated Mr. Bonteen, and might probably have said so. But, as it happened, through God's mercy, he was enabled to prove that he could not possibly have been at the scene of the murder when the murder was committed. During that hour of the night he had been in his own bed; and, had he been out, could not have re-entered the house without calling up the inmates. But, independently of his alibi, Mealyus was able to rely on the absolute absence of any evidence against him. No grey coat could be traced to his hands, even for an hour. His height was very much less than that attributed by Lord Fawn to the man whom he had seen hurrying to the spot. No weapon was found in his possession by which the deed could have been done. Inquiry was made as to the purchase of life-preservers, and the reverend gentleman was taken to half-a-dozen shops at which such instruments had lately been sold. But there had been a run upon life-preservers, in consequence of recommendations as to their use given by certain newspapers;—and it was found as impossible to trace one particular purchase as it would be that of a loaf of bread. At none of the half-dozen shops to which he was taken was Mr. Emilius remembered; and then all further inquiry in that direction was abandoned, and Mr. Emilius was set at liberty. "I forgive my persecutors from the bottom of my heart," he said,—"but God will requit it to them."

In the meantime Phineas was taken to Newgate, and was there confined, almost with the glory and attendance of a State prisoner. This was no common murder, and no common murderer. Nor were they who inter-

ested themselves in the matter the ordinary rag-tag, and bobtail of the people,—the mere wives and children, or perhaps fathers and mothers, or brothers and sisters of the slayer or the slain. Dukes and earls, duchesses and countesses, members of the Cabinet, great statesmen, judges, bishops, and Queen's counsellors, beautiful women, and women of highest fashion, seemed for a while to think of but little else than the fate of Mr. Bonteen and the fate of Phineas Finn. People became intimately acquainted with each other through similar sympathies in this matter who had never before spoken to or seen each other. On the day after the full committal of the man, Mr. Low received a most courteous letter from the Duchess of Omnium, begging him to call in Carlton Terrace if his engagements would permit him to do so. The Duchess had heard that Mr. Low was devoting all his energies to the protection of Phineas Finn; and as a certain friend of hers,—a lady, —was doing the same, she was anxious to bring them together. Indeed, she herself was equally prepared to devote her energies for the present to the same object. She had declared to all her friends,—especially to her husband and to the Duke of St. Bungay,—her absolute conviction of the innocence of the accused man, and had called upon them to defend him. "My dear," said the elder Duke, "I do not think that in my time any innocent man has ever lost his life upon the scaffold."

"Is that a reason why our friend should be the first instance?" said the Duchess.

"He must be tried according to the laws of his country," said the younger Duke.

"Plantagenet, you always speak as if everything were

perfect, whereas you know very well that everything is imperfect. If that man is—is hung, I——"

"Glencora," said her husband, "do not connect yourself with the fate of a stranger from any misdirected enthusiasm."

"I do connect myself. If that man be hung—I shall go into mourning for him. You had better look to it."

Mr. Low obeyed the summons, and called on the Duchess. But, in truth, the invitation had been planned by Madame Goesler, who was present when the lawyer, about five o'clock in the afternoon, was shown into the presence of the Duchess. Tea was immediately ordered, and Mr. Low was almost embraced. He was introduced to Madame Goesler, of whom he did not before remember that he had heard the name, and was at once given to understand that the fate of Phineas was now in question. "We know so well," said the Duchess, "how true you are to him."

"He is an old friend of mine," said the lawyer, "and I cannot believe him to have been guilty of a murder."

"Guilty!—he is no more guilty than I am. We are as sure of that as we are of the sun. We know that he is innocent; do we not, Madame Goesler? And we, too, are very dear friends of his;—that is, I am."

"And so am I," said Madame Goesler in a voice very low and sweet, but so energetic as to make Mr. Low almost rivet his attention upon her.

"You must understand, Mr. Low, that Mr. Finn is a man horribly hated by certain enemies. That wretched Mr. Bonteen hated his very name. But there are other people who think very differently of him. He must be saved."

"Indeed, I hope he may," said Mr. Low.

"We wanted to see you for ever so many reasons. Of course you understand that,—that any sum of money can be spent that the case may want."

"Nothing will be spared on that account, certainly," said the lawyer.

"But money will do a great many things. We would send all round the world if we could get evidence against that other man,—Lady Eustace's husband, you know."

"Can any good be done by sending all round the world?"

"He went back to his own home not long ago,—in Poland, I think," said Madame Goesler. "Perhaps he got the instrument there, and brought it with him." Mr. Low shook his head. "Of course we are very ignorant;—but it would be a pity that everything should not be tried."

"He might have got in and out of the window, you know," said the Duchess. Still Mr. Low shook his head. "I believe things can always be found out, if only you take trouble enough. And trouble means money;—does it not? We would n't mind how many thousand pounds it cost; would we, Marie?"

"I fear that the spending of thousands can do no good," said Mr. Low.

"But something must be done. You don't mean to say that Mr. Finn is to be hung because Lord Fawn says that he saw a man running along the street in a grey coat."

"Certainly not."

"There is nothing else against him;—nobody else saw him."

"If there be nothing else against him he will be acquitted."

"You think, then," said Madame Goesler, "that there will be no use in tracing what the man Mealyus did when he was out of England. He might have bought a grey coat then, and have hidden it till this night, and then have thrown it away." Mr. Low listened to her with close attention, but again shook his head. "If it could be shown that the man had a grey coat at that time it would certainly weaken the effect of Mr. Finn's grey coat."

"And if he bought a bludgeon there it would weaken the effect of Mr. Finn's bludgeon. And if he bought rope to make a ladder it would show that he had got out. It was a dark night, you know, and nobody would have seen it. We have been talking it all over, Mr. Low, and we really think you ought to send somebody."

"I will mention what you say to the gentlemen who are employed on Mr. Finn's defence."

"But will not you be employed?" Then Mr. Low explained that the gentlemen to whom he referred were the attorneys who would get up the case on their friend's behalf, and that as he himself practised in the courts of equity only, he could not defend Mr. Finn on his trial.

"He must have the very best men," said the Duchess.

"He must have good men, certainly."

"And a great many. Could n't we get Sir Gregory Grogram?" Mr. Low shook his head. "I know very well that if you get men who are really,—really swells, for that is what it is, Mr. Low,—and pay them well enough, and so make it really an important thing, they

can browbeat any judge and hoodwink any jury. I dare say it is very dreadful to say so, Mr. Low; but, nevertheless, I believe it, and as this man is certainly innocent it ought to be done. I dare say it 's very shocking, but I do think that twenty thousand pounds spent among the lawyers would get him off."

"I hope we can get him off without expending twenty thousand pounds, Duchess."

"But you can have the money and welcome;—cannot he, Madame Goesler?"

"He could have double that, if double were necessary."

"I would fill the court with lawyers for him," continued the Duchess. "I would cross-examine the witnesses off their legs. I would rake up every wicked thing that horrid Jew has done since he was born. I would make witnesses speak. I would give a carriage and pair of horses to every one of the jurors' wives, if that would do any good. You may shake your head, Mr. Low; but I would. And I 'd carry Lord Fawn off to the Antipodes, too;—and I should n't care if you left him there. I know that this man is innocent, and I 'd do anything to save him. A woman, I know, can't do much;—but she has this privilege, that she can speak out what men only think. I 'd give them two carriages and two pairs of horses apiece if I could do it that way."

Mr. Low did his best to explain to the Duchess that the desired object could hardly be effected after the fashion she proposed, and he endeavoured to persuade her that justice was sure to be done in an English court of law. "Then why are people so very anxious to get this lawyer or that to bamboozle the witnesses?" said

the Duchess. Mr. Low declared it to be his opinion that the poorest man in England was not more likely to be hung for a murder he had not committed than the richest. "Then why would you, if you were accused, have ever so many lawyers to defend you?" Mr. Low went on to explain. "The more money you spend," said the Duchess, "the more fuss you make. And the longer a trial is about and the greater the interest, the more chance a man has to escape. If a man is tried for three days you always think he 'll get off, but if it lasts ten minutes he is sure to be convicted and hung. I 'd have Mr. Finn's trial made so long that they never could convict him. I 'd tire out all the judges and juries in London. If you get lawyers enough they may speak forever." Mr. Low endeavoured to explain that this might prejudice the prisoner. "And I 'd examine every member of the House of Commons, and all the Cabinet, and all their wives. I 'd ask them all what Mr. Bonteen had been saying. I 'd do it in such a way as a trial was never done before;—and I 'd take care that they should know what was coming."

"And if he were convicted afterwards?"

"I 'd buy up the Home Secretary. It 's very horrid to say so, of course, Mr. Low; and I dare say there is nothing wrong ever done in Chancery. But I know what Cabinet Ministers are. If they could get a majority by granting a pardon they 'd do it quick enough."

"You are speaking of a liberal Government, of course, Duchess."

"There is n't twopence to choose between them in that respect. Just at this moment I believe Mr. Finn is the most popular member of the House of Commons;

and I 'd bring all that to bear. You can't but know that if everything of that kind is done it will have an effect. I believe you could make him so popular that the people would pull down the prison rather than have him hung;—so that a jury would not dare to say he was guilty."

"Would that be justice, ladies?" asked the just man.

"It would be success, Mr. Low,—which is a great deal the better thing of the two."

"If Mr. Finn were found guilty, I could not in my heart believe that that would be justice," said Madame Goesler.

Mr. Low did his best to make them understand that the plan of pulling down Newgate by the instrumentality of Phineas Finn's popularity, or of buying up the Home Secretary by threats of parliamentary defection, would hardly answer their purpose. He would, he assured them, suggest to the attorneys employed the idea of searching for evidence against the man Mealyus in his own country, and would certainly take care that nothing was omitted from want of means. "You had better let us put a cheque in your hands," said the Duchess. But to this he would not assent. He did admit that it would be well to leave no stone unturned, and that the turning of such stones must cost money;—but the money, he said, would be forthcoming. "He 's not a rich man himself," said the Duchess. Mr. Low assured her that if money were really wanting he would ask for it. "And now," said the Duchess, "there is one other thing that we want. Can we see him?"

"You, yourself?"

"Yes;—I myself, and Madame Goesler. You look

as if it would be very wicked." Mr. Low thought that it would be wicked;—that the Duke would not like it; and that such a visit would occasion ill-natured remarks. "People do visit him, I suppose. He 's not locked up like a criminal."

"I visit him," said Mr. Low, "and one or two other friends have done so. Lord Chiltern has been with him, and Mr. Erle."

"Has no lady seen him?" asked the Duchess.

"Not to my knowledge."

"Then it 's time some lady should do so. I suppose we could be admitted. If we were his sisters they 'd let us in."

"You must excuse me, Duchess, but——"

"Of course I will excuse you. But what?"

"You are not his sisters."

"If I were engaged to him, to be his wife?—" said Madame Goesler, standing up. "I am not so. There is nothing of that kind. You must not misunderstand me. But if I were?"

"On that plea I presume you could be admitted."

"Why not as a friend? Lord Chiltern is admitted as his friend."

"Because of the prudery of a prison," said the Duchess. "All things are wrong to the lookers after wickedness, my dear. If it would comfort him to see us, why should he not have that comfort?"

"Would you have gone to him in his own lodgings?" asked Mr. Low.

"I would,—if he 'd been ill," said Madame Goesler.

"Madam," said Mr. Low, speaking with a gravity which for a moment had its effect even upon the Duchess of Omnium, "I think, at any rate, that if you

visit Mr. Finn in prison, you should do so through the instrumentality of his Grace, your husband."

"Of course you suspect me of all manner of evil."

"I suspect nothing;—but I am sure that it should be so."

"It shall be so," said the Duchess. "Thank you, sir. We are much obliged to you for your wise counsel."

"I am obliged to you," said Madame Goesler, "because I know that you have his safety at heart."

"And so am I," said the Duchess, relenting, and giving him her hand. "We are really ever so much obliged to you. You don't quite understand about the Duke; and how should you? I never do anything without telling him, but he has n't time to attend to things."

"I hope I have not offended you."

"Oh dear, no. You can't offend me unless you mean it. Good-bye,—and remember to have a great many lawyers, and all with new wigs; and let them all get in a great rage that anybody should suppose it possible that Mr. Finn is a murderer. I 'm sure I am. Good-bye, Mr. Low."

"You 'll never be able to get to him," said the Duchess, as soon as they were alone.

"I suppose not."

"And what good could you do? Of course I 'd go with you if we could get in;—but what would be the use?"

"To let him know that people do not think him guilty."

"Mr. Low will tell him that. I suppose, too, we can write to him. Would you mind writing?"

"I would rather go."

"You might as well tell the truth when you are about it. You are breaking your heart for him."

"If he were to be condemned, and—executed, I should break my heart. I could never appear bright before the world again."

"That is just what I told Plantagenet. I said I would go into mourning."

"And I should really mourn. And yet were he free to-morrow he would be no more to me than any other friend."

"Do you mean you would not marry him?"

"No;—I would not. Nor would he ask me. I will tell you what will be his lot in life,—if he escapes from the present danger."

"Of course he will escape. They don't really hang innocent men."

"Then he will become the husband of Lady Laura Kennedy."

"Poor fellow! If I believed that, I should think it cruel to help him to escape from Newgate."

CHAPTER II.

PHINEAS IN PRISON.

PHINEAS FINN himself, during the fortnight in which he was carried backwards and forwards between his prison and the Bow Street police-office, was able to maintain some outward show of manly dignity,—as though he felt that the terrible accusation and great material inconvenience to which he was subjected were only, and could only be temporary in their nature, and that the truth would soon prevail. During this period he had friends constantly with him,—either Mr. Low, or Lord Chiltern, or Barrington Erle, or his landlord, Mr. Bunce, who, in these days, was very true to him. And he was very frequently visited by the attorney, Mr. Wickerby, who had been expressly recommended to him for this occasion. If anybody could be counted upon to see him through his difficulty it was Wickerby. But the company of Mr. Wickerby was not pleasant to him, because, as far as he could judge, Mr. Wickerby did not believe in his innocence. Mr. Wickerby was willing to do his best for him; was, so to speak, moving heaven and earth on his behalf; was fully conscious that this case was a great affair, and in no respect similar to those which were constantly placed in his hands; but there never fell from him a sympathetic expression of assurance of his client's absolute freedom from all taint of guilt in the matter. From day to day, and ten

times a day, Phineas would express his indignant surprise that any one should think it possible that he had done this deed, but to all these expressions Mr. Wickerby would make no answer whatever. At last Phineas asked him the direct question. "I never suspect anybody of anything," said Mr. Wickerby. "Do you believe in my innocence?" demanded Phineas. "Everbody is entitled to be believed innocent till he has been proved to be guilty," said Mr. Wickerby. Then Phineas appealed to his friend Mr. Low, asking whether he might not be allowed to employ some lawyer whose feelings would be more in unison with his own. But Mr. Low adjured him to make no change. Mr. Wickerby understood the work and was a most zealous man. His client was entitled to his services, but to nothing more than his services. And so Mr. Wickerby carried on the work, fully believing that Phineas Finn had in truth murdered Mr. Bonteen.

But the prisoner was not without sympathy and confidence. Mr. Low, Lord Chiltern, and Lady Chiltern, who, on one occasion, came to visit him with her husband, entertained no doubts prejudicial to his honour. They told him, perhaps, almost more than was quite true of the feelings of the world in his favour. He heard of the friendship and faith of the Duchess of Omnium, of Madame Goesler, and of Lady Laura Kennedy,—hearing also that Lady Laura was now a widow. And then at length his two sisters came over to him from Ireland, and wept and sobbed, and fell into hysterics in his presence. They were sure that he was innocent, as was every one, they said, throughout the length and breadth of Ireland. And Mrs. Bunce, who came to see Phineas in his prison, swore that she

would tear the judge from his bench if he did not at once pronounce a verdict in favour of her darling without waiting for any nonsense of a jury. And Bunce, her husband, having convinced himself that his lodger had not committed the murder, was zealous in another way, taking delight in the case, and proving that no jury could find a verdict of guilty.

During that week Phineas, buoyed up by the sympathy of his friends, and in some measure supported by the excitement of the occasion, carried himself well, and bore bravely the terrible misfortune to which he had been subjected by untoward circumstances. But when the magistrate fully committed him, giving the first public decision on the matter from the bench, declaring to the world at large that on the evidence as given, primâ facie, he, Phineas Finn, must be regarded as the murderer of Mr. Bonteen, our hero's courage almost gave way. If such was now the judicial opinion of the magistrate, how could he expect a different verdict from a jury in two months' time, when he would be tried before a final court? As far as he could understand, nothing more could be learned on the matter. All the facts were known that could be known,—as far as he, or rather his friends on his behalf, were able to search for facts. It seemed to him that there was no tittle whatever of evidence against him. He had walked straight home from his club with the life-preserver in his pocket, and had never turned to the right or to the left. Till he found himself committed he would not believe that any serious and prolonged impediment could be thrown in the way of his liberty. He would not believe that a man altogether innocent could be in danger of the gallows on a false accusation.

It had seemed to him that the police had kept their hold on him with a rabid ferocity, straining every point with the view of showing that it was possible that he should have been the murderer. Every policeman who had been near him, carrying him backward and forward from his prison, or giving evidence as to the circumstances of the locality and of his walk home on that fatal night, had seemed to him to be an enemy. But he had looked for impartiality from the magistrate, —and now the magistrate had failed him. He had seen in court the faces of men well known to him,— men known in the world,—with whom he had been on pleasant terms in Parliament, who had sat upon the bench while he was standing as a culprit between two constables; and they who had been his familiar friends had appeared at once to have been removed from him by some unmeasurable distance. But all that he had, as it were, discounted, believing that a few hours,—at the very longest a few days,—would remove the distance; but now he was sent back to his prison, there to await his trial for the murder.

And it seemed to him that his committal startled no one but himself. Could it be that even his dearest friends thought it possible that he had been guilty? When that day came, and he was taken back to Newgate on his last journey there from Bow Street, Lord Chiltern had returned for a while to Harrington Hall, having promised that he would be back in London as soon as his business would permit; but Mr. Low came to him almost immediately to his prison room. "This is a pleasant state of things," said Phineas, with a forced laugh. But as he laughed he also sobbed, with a low, irrepressible, convulsive movement in his throat.

"Phineas, the time has come in which you must show yourself to be a man."

"A man! Oh yes, I can be a man. A murderer you mean. I shall have to be—hung, I suppose."

"May God, in His mercy, forbid."

"No;—not in His mercy; in His justice. There can be no need for mercy here,—not even from Heaven. When they take my life may He forgive my sins through the merits of my Saviour. But for this there can be no mercy. Why do you not speak? Do you mean to say that I am guilty?"

"I am sure that you are innocent."

"And yet, look here. What more can be done to prove it than has been done? That blundering fool will swear my life away." Then he threw himself on his bed, and gave way to his sobs.

That evening he was alone,—as, indeed, most of his evenings had been spent, and the minutes were minutes of agony to him. The external circumstances of his position were as comfortable as circumstances would allow. He had a room to himself looking out through heavy iron bars into one of the courts of the prison. The chamber was carpeted, and was furnished with bed and chairs and two tables. Books were allowed him as he pleased, and pen and ink. It was May, and no fire was necessary. At certain periods of the day he could walk alone in the court below,—the restriction on such liberty being that at other certain hours the place was wanted for other prisoners. As far as he knew no friend who called was denied to him, though he was by no means certain that his privilege in that respect would not be curtailed now that he had been committed for trial. His food had been plentiful and

well cooked, and even luxuries, such as fish and wine and fruit, had been supplied to him. That the fruit had come from the hot-houses of the Duchess of Omnium, and the wine from Mr. Low's cellar, and the fish and lamb and spring vegetables, the cream and coffee and fresh butter from the unrestricted orders of another friend, that Lord Chiltern had sent him champagne and cigars, and that Lady Chiltern had given directions about the books and stationery, he did not know. But as far as he could be consoled by such comforts, there had been the consolation. If lamb and salad could make him happy he might have enjoyed his sojourn in Newgate. Now, this evening, he was past all enjoyment. It was impossible that he should read. How could a man fix his attention on any book, with a charge of murder against himself affirmed by the deliberate decision of a judge? And he knew himself to be as innocent as the magistrate himself. Every now and then he would rise from his bed, and almost rush across the room as though he would dash his head against the wall. Murder! They really believed that he had deliberately murdered the man;—he, Phineas Finn, who had served his country with repute, who had sat in Parliament, who had prided himself on living with the best of his fellow-creatures, who had been the friend of Mr. Monk and of Lord Cantrip, the trusted intimate of such women as Lady Laura and Lady Chiltern, who had never put his hand to a mean action, or allowed his tongue to speak a mean word! He laughed in his wrath, and then almost howled in his agony. He thought of the young loving wife who had lived with him little more than for one fleeting year, and wondered whether she was looking down upon

him from heaven, and how her spirit would bear this accusation against the man upon whose bosom she had slept, and in whose arms she had gone to her long rest. "They can't believe it," he said aloud. "It is impossible. Why should I have murdered him?" And then he remembered an example in Latin from some rule of grammar, and repeated it to himself over and over again.—"No one at an instant,—of a sudden,—becomes most base." It seemed to him that there was such a want of knowledge of human nature in the supposition that it was possible that he should have committed such a crime. And yet—there he was, committed to take his trial for the murder of Mr. Bonteen.

The days were long, and it was daylight till nearly nine. Indeed the twilight lingered, even through those iron bars, till after nine. He had once asked for candles, but had been told that they could not be allowed him without an attendant in the room,—and he had dispensed with them. He had been treated doubtless with great respect, but nevertheless he had been treated as a prisoner. They hardly denied him anything that he asked, but when he asked for that which they did not choose to grant they would annex conditions which induced him to withdraw his request. He understood their ways now, and did not rebel against them.

On a sudden he heard the key in the door, and the man who attended him entered the room with a candle in his hand. A lady had come to call, and the governor had given permission for her entrance. He would return for the light,—and for the lady, in half an hour. He had said all this before Phineas could see who the lady was. And when he did see the form of her who

followed the gaoler, and who stood with hesitating steps behind him in the doorway, he knew her by her sombre solemn raiment, and not by her countenance. She was dressed from head to foot in the deepest weeds of widowhood, and a heavy veil fell from her bonnet over her face. "Lady Laura, is it you?" said Phineas, putting out his hand. Of course it was Lady Laura. While the Duchess of Omnium and Madame Goesler were talking about such a visit, allowing themselves to be deterred by the wisdom of Mr. Low, she had made her way through bolts and bars, and was now with him in his prison.

"Oh, Phineas!" She slowly raised her veil, and stood gazing at him. "Of all my troubles this,—to see you here,—is the heaviest."

"And of all my consolations to see you here is the greatest." He should not have so spoken. Could he have thought of things as they were, and have restrained himself, he should not have uttered words to her which were pleasant but not true. There came a gleam of sunshine across her face as she listened to him, and then she threw herself into his arms, and wept upon his shoulder. "I did not expect that you would have found me," he said.

She took the chair opposite to that on which he usually sat, and then began her tale. Her cousin, Barrington Erle, had brought her there, and was below, waiting for her in the Governor's house. He had procured an order for her admission that evening, direct from Sir Harry Coldfoot, the Home Secretary, —which, however, as she admitted, had been given under the idea that she and Erle were to see him together. "But I would not let him come with me," she

said. "I could not have spoken to you, had he been here;—could I?"

"It would not have been the same, Lady Laura." He had thought much of his mode of addressing her on occasions before this, at Dresden and at Portman Square, and had determined that he would always give her her title. Once or twice he had lacked the courage to be so hard to her. Now as she heard the name the gleam of sunshine passed from her altogether.

"We hardly expected that we should ever meet in such a place as this?" he said.

"I cannot understand it. They cannot really think you killed him." He smiled, and shook his head. Then she spoke of her own condition. "You have heard what has happened? You know that I am—a widow?"

"Yes;—I had heard." And then he smiled again. "You will have understood why I could not come to you,—as I should have done but for this little accident."

"He died on the day that they arrested you. Was it not strange that such a double blow should fall together? Oswald, no doubt, told you all."

"He told me of your husband's death."

"But not of his will? Perhaps he has not seen you since he heard it." Lord Chiltern had heard of the will before his last visit to Phineas in Newgate, but had not chosen then to speak of his sister's wealth.

"I have heard nothing of Mr. Kennedy's will."

"It was made immediately after our marriage,—and he never changed it, though he had so much cause of anger against me."

"He has not injured you, then,—as regards money."

"Injured me! No, indeed. I am a rich woman, —very rich. All Loughlinter is my own,—for life.

But of what use can it be to me?" He in his present state could tell her of no uses for such a property. "I suppose, Phineas, it cannot be that you are really in danger?"

"In the greatest danger, I fancy."

"Do you mean that they will say—you are guilty?"

"The magistrates have said so already."

"But surely that is nothing. If I thought so, I should die. If I believed it, they should never take me out of the prison while you are here. Barrington says that it cannot be. Oswald and Violet are sure that such a thing can never happen. It was that Jew who did it."

"I cannot say who did it. I did not."

"You! Oh, Phineas! The world must be mad when any can believe it!"

"But they do believe it?" This, he said, meaning to ask a question as to that outside world.

"We do not. Barrington says——"

"What does Barrington say?"

"That there are some who do;—just a few, who were Mr. Bonteen's special friends."

"The police believe it. That is what I cannot understand; men who ought to be keen-eyed and quick-witted. That magistrate believes it. I saw men in the court who used to know me well, and I could see that they believed it. Mr. Monk was here yesterday."

"Does he believe it?"

"I asked him, and he told me—no. But I did not quite trust him as he told me. There are two or three who believe me innocent."

"Who are they?"

"Low, and Chiltern, and his wife;—and that man Bunce, and his wife. If I escape from this,—if they do not hang me,—I will remember them. And there are two other women who know me well enough not to think me a murderer."

"And who are they, Phineas?"

"Madame Goesler, and the Duchess of Omnium."

"Have they been here?" she asked with jealous eagerness.

"Oh no. But I hear that it is so,—and I know it. One learns to feel even from hearsay what is in the minds of people."

"And what do I believe, Phineas? Can you read my thoughts?"

"I know them of old, without reading them now." Then he put forth his hand and took hers. "Had I murdered him in real truth, you would not have believed it."

"Because I love you, Phineas."

Then the key was again heard in the door, and Barrington Erle appeared with the gaolers. The time was up, he said, and he had come to redeem his promise. He spoke cordially to his old friend, and grasped the prisoner's hand cordially,—but not the less did he believe that there was blood on it, and Phineas knew that such was his belief. It appeared on his arrival that Lady Laura had not at all accomplished the chief object of her visit. She had brought with her various cheques, all drawn by Barrington Erle on his banker, —amounting altogether to many hundreds of pounds, —which it was intended that Phineas should use from

time to time for the necessities of his trial. Barrington Erle explained that the money was in fact to be a loan from Lady Laura's father, and was simply passed through his banker's account. But Phineas knew that the loan must come from Lady Laura, and he positively refused to touch it. His friend, Mr. Low, was managing all that for him, and he would not embarrass the matter by a fresh account. He was very obstinate, and at last the cheques were taken away in Barrington Erle's pocket.

"Good night, old fellow," said Erle affectionately. "I 'll see you again before long. May God send you through it all."

"Good night, Barrington. It was kind of you to come to me." Then Lady Laura, watching to see whether her cousin would leave her alone for a moment with the object of her idolatry, paused before she gave him her hand. "Good night, Lady Laura," he said.

"Good night!" Barrington Erle was now just outside the door.

"I shall not forget your coming here to me."

"How should we, either of us, forget it?"

"Come, Laura," said Barrington Erle, "we had better make an end of it."

"But if I should never see him again!"

"Of course you will see him again."

"When! and where! Oh, God,—if they should murder him!" Then she threw herself into his arms, and covered him with kisses, though her cousin had returned into the room and stood over her as she embraced him.

"Laura," said he, "you are doing him an injury.

How should he support himself if you behave like this! Come away."

"Oh, my God, if they should kill him!" she exclaimed. But she allowed her cousin to take her in his arms, and Phineas Finn was left alone without having spoken another word to either of them.

CHAPTER III.

THE MEAGER FAMILY.

On the day after the committal a lady, who had got out of a cab at the corner of Northumberland Street, in the Marylebone Road, walked up that very uninviting street, and knocked at a door just opposite to the deadest part of the dead wall of the Marylebone Workhouse. Here lived Mrs. and Miss Meager,—and also on occasions Mr. Meager, who, however, was simply a trouble and annoyance in the world, going about to race-courses, and occasionally, perhaps, to worse places, and being of no slightest use to the two poor hard-worked women,—mother and daughter,—who endeavoured to get their living by letting lodgings. The task was difficult, for it is not everybody who likes to look out upon the dead wall of a workhouse, and they who do are disposed to think that their willingness that way should be considered in the rent. But Mr. Emilius, when the cruelty of his wife's friends deprived him of the short-lived luxury of his mansion in Lowndes Square, had found in Northumberland Street a congenial retreat, and had for a while trusted to Mrs. and Miss Meager for all his domestic comforts. Mr. Emilius was always a favourite with new friends, and had not as yet had his Northumberland Street gloss rubbed altogether off him when Mr. Bonteen was murdered. As it happened on that night,—or rather early in the day, for Meager had returned to the bosom

of his family after a somewhat prolonged absence in the provinces, and therefore the date had become specially remarkable in the Meager family from the double event,—Mr. Meager had declared that unless his wife could supply him with a five-pound note he must cut his throat instantly. His wife and daughter had regretted the necessity, but had declared the alternative to be out of the question. Whereupon Mr. Meager had endeavoured to force the lock of an old bureau with a carving-knife, and there had been some slight personal encounter,—after which he had had some gin and had gone to bed. Mrs. Meager remembered the day very well indeed, and Miss Meager, when the police came the next morning, had accounted for her black eye by a tragical account of a fall she had had against the bed-post in the dark. Up to that period Mr. Emilius had been everything that was sweet and good,—an excellent, eloquent clergyman, who was being ill-treated by his wife's wealthy relations, who was soft in his manners and civil in his words, and never gave more trouble than was necessary. The period, too, would have been one of comparative prosperity to the Meager ladies,—but for that inopportune return of the head of the family,—as two other lodgers had been inclined to look out upon the dead wall, or else into the cheerful back-yard; which circumstance came to have some bearing upon our story, as Mrs. Meager had been driven by the press of her increased household to let that good-natured Mr. Emilius know that if "he did n't mind it" the latch key might be an accommodation on occasions. To give him his due, indeed, he had, when first taking the rooms, offered to give up the key when not intending to be out at night.

After the murder, Mr. Emilius had been arrested, and had been kept in durance for a week. Miss Meager had been sure that he was innocent; Mrs. Meager had trusted the policemen, who evidently thought that the clergyman was guilty. Of the policemen who were concerned on the occasion, it may be said in a general way that they believed that both the gentlemen had committed the murder,—so anxious were they not to be foiled in the attempts at discovery which their duty called upon them to make. Mr. Meager had left the house on the morning of the arrest, having arranged that little matter of the five-pound note by a compromise. When the policeman came for Mr. Emilius, Mr. Meager was gone. For a day or two the lodger's rooms were kept vacant for the clergyman till Mrs. Meager became quite convinced that he had committed the murder, and then all his things were packed up and placed in the passage. When he was liberated, he returned to the house, and expressed unbounded anger at what had been done. He took his two boxes away in a cab, and was seen no more by the ladies of Northumberland Street.

But a further gleam of prosperity fell upon them in consequence of the tragedy which had been so interesting to them. Hitherto the inquiries made at their house had had reference solely to the habits and doings of their lodger during the last few days; but now there came to them a visitor who made a more extended investigation; and this was one of their own sex. It was Madame Goesler who got out of the cab at the workhouse corner, and walked from thence to Mrs. Meager's house. This was her third appearance in Northumberland Street, and at each coming she had

spoken kind words, and had left behind her liberal recompense for the trouble which she gave. She had no scruples as to paying for the evidence which she desired to obtain,—no fear of any questions which might afterwards be asked in cross-examination. She dealt out sovereigns womanfully, and had had Mrs. and Miss Meager at her feet. Before the second visit was completed they were both certain that the Bohemian converted Jew had murdered Mr. Bonteen, and were quite willing to assist in hanging him.

"Yes, ma'am," said Mrs. Meager, "he did take the key with him. Amelia remembers we were a key short at the time he was away." The absence here alluded to was that occasioned by the journey which Mr. Emilius took to Prague, when he heard that evidence of his former marriage was being sought against him in his own country.

"That he did," said Amelia, "because we were put out ever so. And he had no business, for he was not paying for the room."

"You have only one key?"

"There is three, ma'am. The front attic has one regular because he 's on a daily paper, and of course he does n't get to bed till morning. Meager always takes another, and we can't get it from him ever so."

"And Mr. Emilius took the other away with him?" asked Madame Goesler.

"That he did, ma'am. When he came back he said it had been in a drawer,—but it was n't in the drawer. We always knows what 's in the drawers."

"The drawer was n't left locked, then?"

"Yes, it was, ma'am, and he took that key—beknownst to us," said Mrs. Meager. "But there is

other keys that open the drawers. We are obliged in our line to know about the lodgers, ma'am."

This was certainly no time for Madame Goesler to express disapprobation of the practices which were thus divulged. She smiled and nodded her head, and was quite sympathetic with Mrs. Meager. She had learned that Mr. Emilius had taken the latch key with him to Bohemia, and was convinced that a dozen other latch keys might have been made after the pattern without any apparent detection by the London police. "And now about the coat, Mrs. Meager."

"Well, ma'am?"

"Mr. Meager has not been here since?"

"No, ma'am. Mr. Meager, ma'am, is n't what he ought to be. I never do own it up, only when I 'm driven. He has n't been home."

"I suppose he still has the coat."

"Well, ma'am, no. We sent a young man after him, as you said, and the young man found him at the Newmarket Spring."

"Some water cure?" asked Madame Goesler.

"No, ma'am. It ain't a water cure, but the races. He had n't got the coat. He does always manage a tidy greatcoat when November is coming on, because it covers everything, and is respectable, but he mostly parted with it in April. He gets short, and then he—just pawns it."

"But he had it the night of the murder?"

"Yes, ma'am, he had. Amelia and I remember it especial. When we went to bed, which we did soon after ten, it was kept in this room, lying there on the sofa." They were now sitting in the little back parlour, in which Mrs. and Miss Meager were accustomed to live.

"And it was there in the morning?"

"Father had it on when he went out," said Amelia.

"If we paid him he would get it out of the pawnshop, and bring it to us,—would he not?" asked the lady.

To this Mrs. Meager suggested that it was quite on the cards that Mr. Meager might have been able to do better with his coat by selling it, and if so, it certainly would have been sold, as no prudent idea of redeeming his garment for the next winter's wear would ever enter his mind. And Mrs. Meager seemed to think that such a sale would not have taken place between her husband and any old friend. "He would n't know where he sold it," said Mrs. Meager.

"Anyways he 'd tell us so," said Amelia.

"But if we paid him to be more accurate?" said Madame Goesler.

"They is so afraid of being took up themselves," said Mrs. Meager. There is, however, enough ample evidence that Mr. Meager had possessed a grey great-coat, which during the night of the murder had been left in the little sitting-room, and which they had supposed to have lain there all night. To this coat Mr. Emilius might have had easy access. "But then it was a big man that was seen, and Emilius is n't noways a big man. Meager's coat would be too long for him, ever so much."

"Nevertheless we must try and get the coat," said Madame Goesler. "I 'll speak to a friend about it. I suppose we can find your husband when we want him?"

"I don't know, ma'am. We never can find him; but then we never do want him,—not now. The police

know him at the races, no doubt. You won't go and get him into trouble, ma'am, worse than he is? He 's always been in trouble, but I would n't like to be means of making it worse on him than it is."

Madame Goesler, as she again paid the woman for her services, assured her that she would do no injury to Mr. Meager. All that she wanted of Mr. Meager was his grey coat, and that not with any view that could be detrimental either to his honour or to his safety, and she was willing to pay any reasonable price, —or almost any unreasonable price,—for the coat. But the coat must be made to be forthcoming if it were still in existence, and had not been as yet torn to pieces by the shoddy makers.

"It ain't near come to that yet," said Amelia. "I don't know that I ever see father more respectable, that is, in the way of a greatcoat."

CHAPTER IV.

THE BEGINNING OF THE SEARCH FOR THE KEY AND THE COAT.

When Madame Goesler revealed her plans and ideas to Mr. Wickerby, the attorney who had been employed to bring Phineas Finn through his troubles, that gentleman evidently did not think much of the unprofessional assistance which the lady proposed to give him. "I 'm afraid it is far-fetched, ma'am,—if you understand what I mean," said Mr. Wickerby. Madame Goesler declared that she understood very well what Mr. Wickerby meant, but that she could hardly agree with him. "According to that, the gentleman must have plotted the murder more than a month before he committed it," said Mr. Wickerby.

"And why not?"

"Murder plots are generally the work of a few hours at the longest, Madame Goesler. Anger, combined with an indifference to self-sacrifice, does not endure the wear of many days. And the object here was insufficient. I don't think we can ask to have the trial put off in order to find out whether a false key may have been made in Prague."

"And you will not look for the coat?"

"We can look for it, and probably get it, if the woman has not lied to you; but I don't think it will do us any good. The woman probably is lying. You have been paying her very liberally, so that she has

been making an excellent livelihood out of the murder. No jury would believe her. And a grey coat is a very common thing. After all, it would prove nothing. It would only let the jury know that Mr. Meager had a grey coat as well as Mr. Finn. That Mr. Finn wore a grey coat on that night is a fact which we can't upset. If you got hold of Meager's coat you would n't be a bit nearer to proof that Emilius had worn it."

"There would be the fact that he might have worn it."

"Madame Goesler, indeed it would not help our client. You see what are the difficulties in our way. Mr. Finn was on the spot at the moment, or so near it as to make it certainly possible that he might have been there. There is no such evidence as to Emilius, even if he could be shown to have had a latch key. The man was killed by such an instrument as Mr. Finn had about him. There is no evidence that Mr. Emilius had such an instrument in his hand. A tall man in a grey coat was seen hurrying to the spot at the exact hour. Mr. Finn is a tall man and wore a grey coat at the time. Emilius is not a tall man, and, even though Meager had a grey coat, there is no evidence to show that Emilius ever wore it. Mr. Finn had quarrelled violently with Mr. Bonteen within the hour. It does not appear that Emilius ever quarrelled with Mr. Bonteen, though Mr. Bonteen had exerted himself in opposition to Emilius."

"Is there to be no defence, then?"

"Certainly there will be a defence, and such a defence as I think will prevent any jury from being unanimous in convicting my client. Though there is a great deal of evidence against him, it is all—what we call circumstantial."

"I understand, Mr. Wickerby."

"Nobody saw him commit the murder."

"Indeed no," said Madame Goesler.

"Although there is personal similarity, there is no personal identity. There is no positive proof of anything illegal on his part, or of anything that would have been suspicious had no murder been committed,—such as the purchase of poison, or carrying of a revolver. The life-preserver, had no such instrument been unfortunately used, might have been regarded as a thing of custom."

"But I am sure that that Bohemian did murder Mr. Bonteen," said Madame Goesler, with enthusiasm.

"Madame," said Mr. Wickerby, holding up both his hands, "I can only wish that you could be upon the jury."

"And you won't try to show that the other man might have done it?"

"I think not. Next to an alibi that breaks down;—you know what an alibi is, Madame Goesler?"

"Yes, Mr. Wickerby; I know what an alibi is."

"Next to an alibi that breaks down, an unsuccessful attempt to affix the fault on another party is the most fatal blow which a prisoner's counsel can inflict upon him. It is always taken by the jury as so much evidence against him. We must depend altogether on a different line of defence."

"What line, Mr. Wickerby?"

"Juries are always unwilling to hang,"—Madame Goesler shuddered as the horrid word was broadly pronounced,—"and are apt to think that simply circumstantial evidence cannot be suffered to demand so disagreeable a duty. They are peculiarly averse to

hanging a gentleman, and will hardly be induced to hang a member of Parliament. Then Mr. Finn is very good-looking, and has been popular,—which is all in his favour. And we shall have such evidence on the score of character as was never before brought into one of our courts. We shall have half the Cabinet. There will be two dukes." Madame Goesler, as she listened to the admiring enthusiasm of the attorney while he went on with his list, acknowledged to herself that her dear friend, the Duchess, had not been idle. "There will be three secretaries of state. The Secretary of State for the Home Department himself will be examined. I am not quite sure that we may n't get the Lord Chancellor. There will be Mr. Monk,—about the most popular man in England,—who will speak of the prisoner as his particular friend. I don't think any jury would hang a particular friend of Mr. Monk's. And there will be ever so many ladies. That has never been done before, but we mean to try it." Madame Goesler had heard all this, and had herself assisted in the work. "I rather think we shall get four or five leading members of the opposition, for they all disliked Mr. Bonteen. If we could manage Mr. Daubeny and Mr. Gresham, I think we might reckon ourselves quite safe. I forgot to say that the bishop of Barchester has promised."

"All that won't prove his innocence, Mr. Wickerby." Mr. Wickerby shrugged his shoulders. "If he be acquitted after that fashion men then will say—that he was guilty."

"We must think of his life first, Madame Goesler," said the attorney.

Madame Goesler, when she left the attorney's room,

was very ill-satisfied with him. She desired some adherent to her cause who would with affectionate zeal resolve upon washing Phineas Finn white as snow in reference to the charge now made against him. But no man would so resolve who did not believe in his innocence,—as Madame Goesler believed herself. She herself knew that her own belief was romantic and unpractical. Nevertheless, the conviction of the guilt of that other man, towards which she still thought that much could be done if that coat were found and the maker of a secret key were present, was so strong upon her that she would not allow herself to drop it. It would not be sufficient for her that Phineas Finn should be acquitted. She desired that the real murderer should be hung for the murder, so that all the world might be sure,—as she was sure,—that her hero had been wrongfully accused.

"Do you mean that you are going to start yourself?" the Duchess said to her that same afternoon.

"Yes, I am."

"Then you must be very far gone in love, indeed."

"You would do as much, Duchess, if you were free as I am. It is n't a matter of love at all. It 's womanly enthusiasm for the cause one has taken up."

"I 'm quite as enthusiastic,—only I should n't like to go to Prague in June."

"I 'd go to Siberia in January if I could find out that that horrid man really committed the murder."

"Who are going with you?"

"We shall be quite a company. We have got a detective policeman, and an interpreter who understands Greek and German to go about with the police-

man, and a lawyer's clerk, and there will be my own maid."

"Everybody will know all about it before you get there."

"We are not to go quite together. The policeman and the interpreter are to form one party, and I and my maid another. The poor clerk is to be alone. If they get the coat, of course you 'll telegraph to me."

"Who is to have the coat?"

"I suppose they 'll take it to Mr. Wickerby. He says he does n't want it,—that it would do no good. But I think that if we could show that the man might very easily have been out of the house,—that he had certainly provided himself with means of getting out of the house secretly,—the coat would be of service. I am going at any rate; and shall be in Paris to-morrow morning."

"I think it very grand of you, my dear; and for your sake I hope he may live to be Prime Minister. Perhaps, after all, he may give Plantagenet 'his Garter.'"

When the old Duke died, a Garter became vacant, and had of course fallen to the gift of Mr. Gresham. The Duchess had expected that it would be continued in the family, as had been the lieutenancy of Barsetshire, which also had been held by the old Duke. But the Garter had been given to Lord Cantrip, and the Duchess was sore. With all her radical propensities and inclination to laugh at dukes and marquises, she thought very much of Garters and lieutenancies;—but her husband would not think of them at all, and hence there were words between them. The Duchess had declared that the Duke should insist on having the

Garter. "These are things that men do not ask for," the Duke had said.

"Don't tell me, Plantagenet, about not asking. Everybody asks for everything now-a-days."

"Your everybody is not correct, Glencora. I never yet asked for anything,—and never shall. No honour has any value in my eyes, unless it comes unasked." Thereupon it was that the Duchess now suggested that Phineas Finn, when Prime Minister, might perhaps bestow a Garter upon her husband.

And so Madame Goesler started for Prague with the determination of being back, if possible, before the trial began. It was to be commenced at the Old Bailey towards the end of June, and people already began to foretell that it would extend over a very long period. The circumstances seemed to be simple; but they who understood such matters declared that the duration of a trial depended a great deal more on the public interest felt in the matter than upon its own nature. Now it was already perceived that no trial of modern days had ever been so interesting as would be this trial. It was already known that the Attorney-General, Sir Gregory Grogram, was to lead the case for the prosecution, and that the Solicitor-General, Sir Simon Slope, was to act with him. It had been thought to be due to the memory and character of Mr. Bonteen, who when he was murdered had held the office of President of the Board of Trade, and who had very nearly been Chancellor of the Exchequer, that so unusual a task should be imposed on these two high legal officers of the Government. No doubt there would be a crowd of juniors with them, but it was understood that Sir Gregory Grogram would himself take the burden of

the task upon his own shoulders. It was declared everywhere that Sir Gregory did believe Phineas Finn to be guilty, but it was also declared that Sir Simon Slope was convinced he was innocent. The defence was to be entrusted to the well-practised but now aged hands of that most experienced practitioner Mr. Chaffanbrass, than whom no barrister living or dead ever rescued more culprits from the fangs of the law. With Mr. Chaffanbrass, who quite late in life had consented to take a silk gown, was to be associated Mr. Serjeant Birdbott,—who was said to be employed in order that the case might be in safe hands should the strength of Mr. Chaffanbrass fail him at the last moment; and Mr. Snow, who was supposed to handle a witness more judiciously than any of the rising men, and that subtle, courageous, eloquent, and painstaking youth, Mr. Golightly, who now, with no more than ten or fifteen years' practice, was already known to be earning his bread and supporting a wife and family.

But the glory of this trial would not depend chiefly on the array of counsel, nor on the fact that the Lord Chief-Justice himself would be the judge, so much as on the social position of the murdered man and of the murderer. Noble lords and great statesmen would throng the bench of the court to see Phineas Finn tried, and all the world who could find an entrance would do the same to see the great statesmen and the noble lords. The importance of such an affair increases like a snowball as it is rolled on. Many people talk much, and then very many people talk very much more. The under-sheriffs of the City, praiseworthy gentlemen not hitherto widely known to fame, became suddenly conspicuous and popular, as being the dis-

pensers of admissions to seats in the court. It had been already admitted by judges and counsel that sundry other cases must be postponed, because it was known that the Bonteen murder would occupy at least a week. It was supposed that Mr. Chaffanbrass would consume a whole day at the beginning of the trial in getting a jury to his mind,—a matter on which he was known to be very particular,—and another whole day at the end of the trial in submitting to the jury the particulars of all the great cases on record in which circumstantial evidence was known to have led to improper verdicts. It was therefore understood that the last week in June would be devoted to the trial, to the exclusion of all other matters of interest. When Mr. Gresham, hard pressed by Mr. Turnbull for a convenient day, offered that gentleman Thursday the 24th of June, for suggesting to the House a little proposition of his own with reference to the English Church Establishment, Mr. Turnbull openly repudiated the offer, because on that day the trial of Phineas Finn would be commenced. "I hope," said Mr. Gresham, "that the work of the country will not be impeded by that unfortunate affair." "I am afraid," said Mr. Turnbull, "that the right honourable gentleman will find that the member for Tankerville will on that day monopolise the attention of this House." The remark was thought to have been made in very bad taste, but nobody doubted its truth. Perhaps the interest was enhanced among politicians by the existence very generally of an opinion that though Phineas Finn had murdered Mr. Bonteen, he would certainly be acquitted. Nothing could then prevent the acquitted murderer from resuming his seat in the House, and gentlemen

were already beginning to ask themselves after what fashion it would become them to treat him. Would the speaker catch his eye when he rose to speak? Would he still be "Phineas" to the very large number of men with whom his general popularity had made him intimate? Would he be cold-shouldered at the clubs, and treated as one whose hands were red with blood? or would he become more popular than ever and receive an ovation after his acquittal?

In the meantime Madame Goesler started on her journey for Prague.

CHAPTER V.

THE TWO DUKES.

It was necessary that the country should be governed, even though Mr. Bonteen had been murdered;—and in order that it should be duly governed it was necessary that Mr. Bonteen's late place at the Board of Trade should be filled. There was some hesitation as to the filling it, and when the arrangement was completed, people were very much surprised indeed. Mr. Bonteen had been appointed chiefly because it was thought that he might in that office act as a quasi House of Commons deputy to the Duke of Omnium in carrying out his great scheme of a five-farthinged penny and a ten-pennied shilling. The Duke, in spite of his wealth and rank and honour, was determined to go on with his great task. Life would be nothing to him now unless he could at least hope to arrange the five farthings. When his wife had bullied him about the Garter, he had declared to her, and with perfect truth, that he had never asked for anything; he had gone on to say that he never would ask for anything; and he certainly did not think that he was betraying himself with reference to that assurance when he suggested to Mr. Gresham that he would himself take the place left vacant by Mr. Bonteen,—of course retaining his seat in the Cabinet.

"I should hardly have ventured to suggest such an arrangement to your Grace," said the Prime Minister.

"Feeling that it might be so, I thought that I would

venture to ask," said the Duke. "I am sure you know that I am the last man to interfere as to place or the disposition of power."

"Quite the last man," said Mr. Gresham.

"But it has always been held that the Board of Trade is not incompatible with the Peerage."

"Oh dear, yes."

"And I can feel myself nearer to this affair of mine there than I can elsewhere."

Mr. Gresham of course had no objection to urge. This great nobleman, who was now asking for Mr. Bonteen's shoes, had been Chancellor of the Exchequer, and would have remained Chancellor of the Exchequer had not the mantle of his nobility fallen upon him. At the present moment he held an office in which peers are often temporarily shelved, or put away, perhaps, out of harm's way for the time, so that they may be brought down and used when wanted, without having received crack or detriment from that independent action into which a politician is likely to fall when his party is "in" but he is still "out." He was Lord Privy Seal,—a lordship of state which does carry with it a status and a seat in the Cabinet, but does not necessarily entail any work. But the present lord, who cared nothing for status, and who was much more intent on his work than he was even on his seat in the Cabinet, was possessed by what many of his brother politicians regarded as a morbid dislike to pretences. He had not been happy during his few weeks of the Privy Seal, and had almost envied Mr. Bonteen the realities of the Board of Trade. "I think upon the whole it will be best to make the change," he said to Mr. Gresham. And Mr. Gresham was delighted.

But there were one or two men of mark,—one or two who were older than Mr. Gresham probably, and less perfect in their liberal sympathies,—who thought that the Duke of Omnium was derogating from his proper position in the step which he was now taking. Chief among these was his friend the Duke of St. Bungay, who alone perhaps could venture to argue the matter with him. "I almost wish that you had spoken to me first," said the elder Duke.

"I feared that I should find you so strongly opposed to my resolution."

"If it was a resolution."

"I think it was," said the younger. "It was a great misfortune to me that I should have been obliged to leave the House of Commons."

"You should not feel it so."

"My whole life was there," said he who, as Plantagenet Palliser, had been so good a commoner.

"But your whole life should certainly not be there now,—nor your whole heart. On you the circumstances of your birth have imposed duties quite as high, and I will say quite as useful, as any which a career in the House of Commons can put within the reach of a man."

"Do you think so, Duke?"

"Certainly I do. I do think that the England which we know could not be the England that she is but for the maintenance of a high-minded, proud, and self-denying nobility. And though with us there is no line dividing our very broad aristocracy into two parts, a higher and a lower, or a greater and a smaller, or a richer and a poorer, nevertheless we all feel that the success of our order depends chiefly on the conduct of those whose rank is the highest and whose means are

the greatest. To some few, among whom you are conspicuously one, wealth has been given so great and rank so high that much of the welfare of your country depends on the manner in which you bear yourself as the Duke of Omnium."

"I would not wish to think so."

"Your uncle so thought. And though he was a man very different from you, not inured to work in his early life, with fewer attainments, probably a slower intellect, and whose general conduct was inferior to your own, —I speak freely, because the subject is important,—he was a man who understood his position and the requirements of his order very thoroughly. A retinue almost royal, together with an expenditure which royalty could not rival, secured for him the respect of the nation."

"Your life has not been as was his, and you have won a higher respect."

"I think not. The greater part of my life was spent in the House of Commons, and my fortune was never much more than the tenth of his. But I wish to make no such comparison."

"I must make it, if I am to judge which I would follow."

"Pray understand me, my friend," said the old man, energetically. "I am not advising you to abandon public life in order that you may live in repose as a great nobleman. It would not be in your nature to do so, nor could the country afford to lose your services. But you need not therefore take your place in the arena of politics as though you were still Plantagenet Palliser, with no other duties than those of a politician,—as you might so well have done had your uncle's titles and wealth descended to a son."

"I wish they had," said the regretful Duke.

"It cannot be so. Your brother perhaps wishes that he were a duke, but it has been arranged otherwise. It is vain to repine. Your wife is unhappy because your uncle's Garter was not at once given to you."

"Glencora is like other women,—of course."

"I share her feelings. Had Mr. Gresham consulted me, I should not have scrupled to tell him that it would have been for the welfare of his party that the Duke of Omnium should be graced with any and every honour in his power to bestow. Lord Cantrip is my friend, almost as warmly as are you; but the country would not have missed the ribbon from the breast of Lord Cantrip. Had you been more the Duke, and less the slave of your country, it would have been sent to you. Do I make you angry by speaking so?"

"Not in the least. I have but one ambition."

"And that is——?"

"To be the serviceable slave of my country."

"A man is more serviceable than a slave," said the old man.

"No; no; I deny it. I can admit much from you, but I cannot admit that. The politician who becomes the master of his country sinks from the statesman to the tyrant."

"We misunderstand each other, my friend. Pitt, and Peel, and Palmerston were not tyrants, though each assumed and held for himself to the last the mastery of which I speak. Smaller men, too, have been slaves, have been as patriotic as they, but less useful. I regret that you should follow Mr. Bonteen in his office."

"Because he was Mr. Bonteen."

"All the circumstances of the transfer of office occa-

sioned by your uncle's death seem to me to make it undesirable. I would not have you make yourself too common. This very murder adds to the feeling. Because Mr. Bonteen has been lost to us, the Minister has recourse to you."

"It was my own suggestion."

"But who knows that it was so? You, and I, and Mr. Gresham—and perhaps one or two others."

"It is too late now, Duke; and, to tell the truth of myself, not even you can make me other than I am. My uncle's life to me was always a problem which I could not understand. Were I to attempt to walk in his ways I should fail utterly, and become absurd. I do not feel the disgrace of following Mr. Bonteen."

"I trust you may at least be less unfortunate."

"Well;—yes. I need not expect to be murdered in the streets because I am going to the Board of Trade. I shall have made no enemy by my political success."

"You think that—Mr. Finn—did do that deed?" asked the elder Duke.

"I hardly know what I think. My wife is sure that he is innocent."

"The Duchess is enthusiastic always."

"Many others think the same. Lord and Lady Chiltern are sure of that."

"They were always his best friends."

"I am told that many of the lawyers are sure that it will be impossible to convict him. If he be acquitted I shall strive to think him innocent. He will come back to the House, of course."

"I should think he would apply for the Hundreds," said the Duke of St. Bungay.

"I do not see why he should. I would not in his

place. If he be innocent, why should he admit himself unfit for a seat in Parliament? I tell you what he might do;—resign, and then throw himself again upon his constituency." The other Duke shook his head, thereby declaring in his opinion that Phineas Finn was in truth the man who had murdered Mr. Bonteen.

When it was publicly known that the Duke of Omnium had stepped into Mr. Bonteen's shoes, the general opinion certainly coincided with that given by the Duke of St. Bungay. It was not only that the late Chancellor of the Exchequer should not have consented to fill so low an office, or that the Duke of Omnium should have better known his own place, or that he should not have succeeded a man so insignificant as Mr. Bonteen. These things, no doubt, were said,—but more was said also. It was thought that he should not have gone to an office which had been rendered vacant by the murder of a man who had been placed there merely to assist himself. If the present arrangement was good, why should it not have been made independently of Mr. Bonteen? Questions were asked about it in both Houses, and the transfer, no doubt, did have the effect of lowering the man in the estimation of the political world. He himself felt that he did not stand so high with his colleagues as when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer; not even so high as when he held the Privy Seal. In the printed lists of those who attended the Cabinets his name generally was placed last, and an opponent on one occasion thought, or pretended to think, that he was no more than postmaster-general. He determined to bear all this without wincing,—but he did wince. He would not own to himself that he had been wrong, but he was sore,—as a man

is sore who doubts about his own conduct; and he was not the less so because he strove to bear his wife's sarcasms without showing that they pained him.

"They say that poor Lord Fawn is losing his mind," she said to him.

"Lord Fawn! I have n't heard anything about it."

"He was engaged to Lady Eustace once, you remember. They say that he 'll be made to declare why he did n't marry her if this bigamy case goes on. And then it 's so unfortunate that he should have seen the man in the grey coat; I hope he won't have to resign."

"I hope not, indeed."

"Because, of course you 'd have to take his place as under-secretary." This was very awkward; but the husband only smiled, and expressed a hope that if he did so he might himself be equal to his new duties. "By-the-bye, Plantagenet, what do you mean to do about the jewels?"

"I have n't thought about them. Madame Goesler had better take them."

"But she won't."

"I suppose they had better be sold."

"By auction?"

"That would be the proper way."

"I should n't like that at all. Could n't we buy them ourselves, and let the money stand till she choose to take it? It 's an affair of trade, I suppose, and you 're at the head of all that now." Then again she asked him some question about the Home Secretary, with reference to Phineas Finn; and when he told her that it would be highly improper for him to speak to that officer on such a subject, she pretended to suppose

that the impropriety would consist in the interference of a man holding so low a position as he was. "Of course it is not the same now," she said, "as it used to be when you were at the Exchequer." All which he took without uttering a word of anger, or showing a sign of annoyance. "You only get two thousand a year, do you, at the Board of Trade, Plantagenet?"

"Upon my word, I forget. I think it 's two thousand five hundred."

"How nice! It was five at the Exchequer, was n't it?"

"Yes; five thousand at the Exchequer."

"When you 're a lord of the Treasury it will only be one;—will it?"

"What a goose you are, Glencora. If it suited me to be a lord of the Treasury, what difference would the salary make?"

"Not the least;—nor yet the rank, or the influence, or the prestige, or the general fitness of things. "You are above all such sublunary ideas. You would clean Mr. Gresham's shoes for him, if—the service of your country required it." These last words she added in a tone of voice very similar to that which her husband himself used on occasions.

"I would even allow you to clean them,—if the service of the country required it," said the Duke.

But, though he was magnanimous, he was not happy, and perhaps the intense anxiety which his wife displayed as to the fate of Phineas Finn added to his discomfort. The Duchess, as the Duke of St. Bungay had said, was enthusiastic, and he never for a moment dreamed of teaching her to change her nature; but it would have

been as well if her enthusiasm at the present moment could have been brought to display itself on some other subject. He had been brought to feel that Phineas Finn had been treated badly when the good things of Government were being given away, and that this had been caused by the jealous prejudices of the man who had been since murdered. But an expectant under-secretary of state, let him have been ever so cruelly left out in the cold, should not murder the man by whom he has been ill-treated. Looking at all the evidence as best he could, and listening to the opinions of others, the Duke did think that Phineas had been guilty. The murder had clearly been committed by a personal enemy, not by a robber. Two men were known to have entertained feelings of enmity against Mr. Bonteen; as to one of whom he was assured that it was impossible that he should have been on the spot. As to the other it seemed equally manifest that he must have been there. If it were so, it would have been much better that his wife should not display her interest publicly in the murderer's favour. But the Duchess, wherever she went, spoke of the trial as a persecution; and seemed to think that the prisoner should already be treated as a hero and a martyr. "Glencora," he said to her, "I wish that you could drop the subject of this trial till it be over."

"But I can't."

"Surely you can avoid speaking of it."

"No more than you can avoid your decimals. Out of the full heart the mouth speaks, and my heart is very full. What harm do I do?"

"You set people talking of you."

"They have been doing that ever since we were

married;—but I do not know that they have made out much against me. We must go after our nature, Plantagenet. Your nature is decimals. I run after units." He did not deem it wise to say anything further,—knowing that to this evil also of Phineas Finn the gods would at last vouchsafe an ending.

CHAPTER VI.

MRS. BONTEEN.

At the time of the murder, Lady Eustace, whom we must regard as the wife of Mr. Emilius till it be proved that he had another wife when he married her, was living as the guest of Mr. Bonteen. Mr. Bonteen had pledged himself to prove the bigamy, and Mrs. Bonteen had opened her house and her heart to the injured lady. Lizzie Eustace, as she had always been called, was clever, rich, and pretty, and knew well how to ingratiate herself with the friend of the hour. She was a greedy, grasping little woman, but, when she had before her a sufficient object, she could appear to pour all that she had into her friend's lap with all the prodigality of a child. Perhaps Mrs. Bonteen had liked to have things poured into her lap. Perhaps Mr. Bonteen had enjoyed the confidential tears of a pretty woman. It may be that the wrongs of a woman doomed to live with Mr. Emilius as his wife had touched their hearts. Be that as it might, they had become the acknowledged friends and supporters of Lady Eustace, and she was living with them in their little house in St. James's Place on that fatal night.

Lizzie behaved herself very well when the terrible tidings were brought home. Mr. Bonteen was so often late at the House or at his club that his wife rarely sat up for him; and when the servants were disturbed between six and seven o'clock in the morning, no sur-

prise had as yet been felt at his absence. The sergeant of police who had brought the news sent for the maid of the unfortunate lady, and the maid, in her panic, told her story to Lady Eustace before daring to communicate it to her mistress. Lizzie Eustace, who in former days had known something of policemen, saw the man, and learned from him all that there was to learn. Then, while the sergeant remained on the landing-place, outside, to support her, if necessary, with the maid by her side to help her, kneeling by the bed, she told the wretched woman what had happened .We need not witness the paroxysms of the widow's misery, but we may understand that Lizzie Eustace was from that moment more strongly fixed than ever in her friendship with Mrs. Bonteen.

When the first three or four days of agony and despair had passed by, and the mind of the bereaved woman was able to turn itself from the loss to the cause of the loss, Mrs. Bonteen became fixed in her certainty that Phineas Finn had murdered her husband, and seemed to think that it was the first and paramount duty of the present Government to have the murderer hung,—almost without a trial. When she found that, at the best, the execution of the man she so vehemently hated could not take place for two months after the doing of the deed, even if then, she became almost frantic in her anger. Surely they would not let him escape! What more proof could be needed? Had not the miscreant quarrelled with her husband, and behaved abominably to him but a few minutes before the murder? Had he not been on the spot with the murderous instrument in his pocket? Had he not been seen by Lord Fawn hastening on the steps of her dear

and doomed husband? Mrs. Bonteen, as she sat enveloped in her new weeds, thirsting for blood, could not understand that further evidence should be needed, or that a rational doubt should remain in the mind of any one who knew the circumstances. It was to her as though she had seen the dastard blow struck, and with such conviction as this on her mind did she insist on talking of the coming trial to her inmate, Lady Eustace. But Lizzie had her own opinion, though she was forced to leave it unexpressed in the presence of Mrs. Bonteen. She knew the man who claimed her as his wife, and did not think that Phineas Finn was guilty of the murder. Her Emilius,—her Yosef Mealyus, as she had delighted to call him, since she had separated herself from him,—was, as she thought, the very man to commit a murder. He was by no means degraded in her opinion by the feeling. To commit great crimes is the line of life that comes naturally to some men, and was, as she thought, a line less objectionable than that which confines itself to small crimes. She almost felt that the audacity of her husband in doing such a deed redeemed her from some of the ignominy to which she had subjected herself by her marriage with a runaway who had another wife living. There was a dash of adventure about it which was almost gratifying. But these feelings she was obliged, at any rate for the present, to keep to herself. Not only must she acknowledge the undoubted guilt of Phineas Finn for the sake of her friend, Mrs. Bonteen; but she must consider carefully whether she would gain or lose more by having a murderer for her husband. She did not relish the idea of being made a widow by the gallows. She was still urgent as to the charge of bigamy, and

should she succeed in proving that the man had never been her husband, then she did not care how soon they might hang him. But for the present it was better for all reasons that she should cling to the Phineas Finn theory,—feeling certain that it was the bold hand of her own Emilius who had struck the blow.

She was by no means free from the solicitations of her husband, who knew well where she was, and who still adhered to his purpose of reclaiming his wife and his wife's property. When he was released by the magistrate's order, and had recovered his goods from Mr. Meager's house, and was once more established in lodgings, humbler, indeed, than those in Northumberland Street, he wrote the following letter to her who had been for one blessed year the partner of his joys, and his bosom's mistress:—

"3 Jellybag Street, Edgeware Road,
"May 26, 18—.

"Dearest Wife,—You will have heard to what additional sorrow and disgrace I have been subjected through the malice of my enemies. But all in vain! Though princes and potentates have been arrayed against me,"—the princes and potentates had no doubt been Lord Chiltern and Mr. Low,—"innocence has prevailed, and I have come out from the ordeal white as bleached linen or unsullied snow. The murderer is in the hands of justice, and though he be the friend of kings and princes,"—Mr. Emilius had probably heard that the Prince had been at the club with Phineas,—"yet shall justice be done upon him, and the truth of the Lord shall be made to prevail. Mr. Bonteen has been very hostile to me, believing evil things of me,—

and instigating you, my beloved, to believe evil of me. Nevertheless, I grieve for his death. I lament bitterly that he should have been cut off in his sins, and hurried before the judgment seat of the Great Judge without an hour given to him for repentance. Let us pray that the mercy of the Lord may be extended even to him. I beg that you will express my deepest commiseration to his widow, and assure her that she has my prayers.

"And now, my dearest wife, let me approach my own affairs. As I have come out unscorched from the last fiery furnace which has been heated for me by my enemies seven times hot, so shall I escape from that other fire with which the poor man who has gone from us endeavoured to envelop me. If they have made you believe that I have any wife but yourself they have made you believe a falsehood. You, and you only, have my hand. You, and you only, have my heart. I know well what attempts are being made to suborn false evidence in my old country, and how the follies of my youth are being pressed against me,—how anxious are proud Englishmen that the poor Bohemian should be robbed of the beauty and wit and wealth which he had won for himself. But the Lord fights on my side, and I shall certainly prevail.

"If you will come back to me all shall be forgiven. My heart is as it ever was. Come, and let us leave this cold and ungenial country and go to the sunny south; to the islands of the blest,"—Mr. Emilius during his married life had not quite fathomed the depths of his wife's character, though no doubt he had caught some points of it with sufficient accuracy,—"where we may forget these blood-stained sorrows, and mutually

forgive each other. What happiness, what joys can you expect in your present mode of life? Even your income,—which in truth is my income,—you cannot obtain, because the tenants will not dare to pay it in opposition to my legal claims. But of what use is gold? What can purple do for us, and fine linen, and rich jewels, without love and a contented heart? Come, dearest, once more to your own one, who will never remember aught of the sad rupture which enemies have made, and we will hurry to the setting sun, and recline on mossy banks, and give up our souls to Elysium." (As Lizzie read this she uttered an exclamation of disgust. Did the man after all know so little of her as to suppose that she, with all her experiences, did not know how to keep her own life and her own pocket separate from her romance? She despised him for this, almost as much as she respected him for the murder.)

"If you will only say that you will see me, I will be at your feet in a moment. Till the solemnity with which the late tragical event must have filled you shall have left you leisure to think of all this, I will not force myself into your presence, or seek to secure by law rights which will be much dearer to me if they are accorded by your own sweet good will. And in the meantime, I will agree that the income shall be drawn, provided that it be equally divided between us. I have been sorely straitened in my circumstances by these last events. My congregation is of course dispersed. Though my innocence has been triumphantly displayed, my name has been tarnished. It is with difficulty that I find a spot where to lay my weary head. I am ahungered and athirst;—and my very garments

are parting from me in my need. Can it be that you willingly doom me to such misery because of my love for you? Had I been less true to you, it might have been otherwise.

"Let me have an answer at once, and I will instantly take steps about the money if you will agree.

"Your truly most loving husband,

"JOSEPH EMILIUS.

"To Lady Eustace, wife of the Rev. Joseph Emilius."

When Lizzie had read the letter twice through she resolved that she would show it to her friend. "I know it will reopen the floodgates of your grief," she said; "but unless you see it, how can I ask from you the advice which is so necessary to me?" But Mrs. Bonteen was a woman sincere at any rate in this,—that the loss of her husband had been to her so crushing a calamity that there could be no reopening of the floodgates. The grief that cannot bear allusion to its causes has generally something of affectation in its composition. The floodgates with this widowed one had never yet been for a moment closed. It was not that her tears were ever flowing, but that her heart had never yet for a moment ceased to feel that its misery was incapable of alleviation. No utterances concerning her husband could make her more wretched than she was. She took the letter and read it through. "I dare say he is a bad man," said Mrs. Bonteen.

"Indeed he is," said the bad man's wife.

"But he was not guilty of this crime."

"Oh no;—I am sure of that," said Lady Eustace, feeling certain at the same time that Mr. Bonteen had fallen by her husband's hands.

"And therefore I am glad they have given him up. There can be no doubt now about it."

"Everybody knows who did it now," said Lady Eustace.

"Infamous ruffian! My poor dear lost one always knew what he was. Oh that such a creature should have been allowed to come among us!"

"Of course he 'll be hung, Mrs. Bonteen."

"Hung! I should think so! What other end would be fit for him? Oh yes; they must hang him. But it makes one think that the world is too hard a place to live in, when such a one as he can cause so great a ruin."

"It has been very terrible."

"Think what the country has lost! They tell me that the Duke of Omnium is to take my husband's place; but the Duke cannot do what he did. Every one knows that for real work there was no one like him. Nothing was more certain than that he would have been Prime Minister,—oh, very soon. They ought to pinch him to death with red-hot tweezers."

But Lady Eustace was anxious at the present moment to talk about her own troubles. "Of course, Mr. Emilius did not commit the murder."

"Phineas Finn committed it," said the half-maddened woman, rising from her chair. "And Phineas Finn shall hang by his neck till he is dead."

"But Emilius has certainly got another wife in Prague."

"I suppose you know. He said it was so, and he was always right."

"I am sure of it,—just as you are sure of this horrid Mr. Finn."

"The two things can't be named together, Lady Eustace."

"Certainly not. I would n't think of being so unfeeling. But he has written me this letter, and what must I do? It is very dreadful about the money, you know."

"He cannot touch your money. My dear one always said that he could not touch it."

"But he prevents me from touching it. What they give me only comes by a sort of favour from the lawyer. I almost wish that I had compromised."

"You would not be rid of him that way."

"No;—not quite rid of him. You see I never had to take that horrid name because of the title. I suppose I had better send the letter to the lawyer."

"Send it to the lawyer, of course. That is what he would have done. They tell me that the trial is to be on the 24th of June. Why should they postpone it so long? They know all about it. They always postpone everything. If he had lived, there would be an end of that before long."

Lady Eustace was tired of the virtues of her friend's martyred lord, and was very anxious to talk of her own affairs. She was still holding her husband's letter open in her hand, and was thinking how she could force her friend's dead lion to give place for a while to her own live dog, when her servant announced that Mr. Camperdown, the attorney, was below. In former days there had been an old Mr. Camperdown, who was vehemently hostile to poor Lizzie Eustace's; but now, in her new troubles, the firm that had ever been true to her first husband had taken up her case for the sake of the family and her property—and for the sake of the heir, Lizzie Eustace's little boy; and Mr. Cam-

perdown's firm had, next to Mr. Bonteen, been the depository of her trust. He had sent clerks out to Prague,—one who had returned ill,—as some had said poisoned, though the poison had probably been nothing more than the diet natural to Bohemians. And then another had been sent. This, of course, had all been previous to Madame Goesler's self-imposed mission,—which, though it was occasioned altogether by the suspected wickedness of Mr. Emilius, had no special reference to his matrimonial escapades. And now Mr. Camperdown was downstairs. "Shall I go down to him, dear Mrs. Bonteen?"

"He may come here if you please."

"Perhaps I had better go down. He will disturb you."

"My darling lost one always thought that there should be two present to hear such matters. He said it was safe." Mr. Camperdown, junior, was therefore shown upstairs to Mrs. Bonteen's drawing-room.

"We have found it all out, Lady Eustace," said Mr. Camperdown.

"Found out what?"

"We 've got Madame Mealyus over here."

"No!" said Mrs. Bonteen, with her hands raised. Lady Eustace sat silent, with her mouth open.

"Yes, indeed;—and photographs of the registry of the marriage from the books of the synagogue at Cracow. His signature was Yosef Mealyus, and his handwriting isn't a bit altered. I think we could have proved it without the lady; but of course it was better to bring her if possible."

"Where is she?" asked Lizzie, thinking that she would like to see her own predecessor.

"We have her safe, Lady Eustace. She 's not in custody; but as she can't speak a word of English or French, she finds it more comfortable to be kept in private. We 're afraid it will cost a little money."

"Will she swear that she is his wife?" asked Mrs. Bonteen.

"Oh yes; there 'll be no difficulty about that. But her swearing alone might n't be enough."

"Surely that settles it all," said Lady Eustace.

"For the money that we shall have to pay," said Mr. Camperdown, "we might probably have got a dozen Bohemian ladies to come and swear that they were married to Yosef Mealyus at Cracow. The difficulty has been to bring over documentary evidence which will satisfy a jury that this is the woman she says she is. But I think we 've got it."

"And I shall be free!" said Lady Eustace, clasping her hands together.

"It will cost a good deal, I fear," said Mr. Camperdown.

"But I shall be free! Oh, Mr. Camperdown, there is not a woman in all the world who cares so little for money as I do. But I shall be free from the power of that horrid man who has entangled me in the meshes of his sinful life." Mr. Camperdown told her that he thought that she would be free, and went on to say that Yosef Mealyus had already been arrested, and was again in prison. The unfortunate man had not therefore enjoyed that humbler apartment which he had found for himself in Jellybag Street.

When Mr. Camperdown went, Mrs. Bonteen followed him out to the top of the stairs. "You have heard about the trial, Mr. Camperdown?" He said he knew

that it was to take place at the Central Criminal Court in June. "Yes; I don't know why they have put it off so long. People know that he did it—eh?" Mr. Camperdown, with funereal sadness, declared that he had never looked into the matter. "I cannot understand that everybody should not know it," said Mrs. Bonteen.

CHAPTER VII.

TWO DAYS BEFORE THE TRIAL.

THERE was a scene in the private room of Mr. Wickerby, the attorney in Hatton Garden, which was very distressing indeed to the feelings of Lord Fawn, and which induced his lordship to think that he was being treated without that respect which was due to him as a peer and a member of the Government. There were present at this scene Mr. Chaffanbrass, the old barrister, Mr. Wickerby himself, Mr. Wickerby's confidential clerk, Lord Fawn, Lord Fawn's solicitor,—that same Mr. Camperdown whom we saw in the last chapter calling upon Lady Eustace,—and a policeman. Lord Fawn had been invited to attend, with many protestations of regret as to the trouble thus imposed upon him, because the very important nature of the evidence about to be given by him at the forthcoming trial seemed to render it expedient that some questions should be asked. This was on Tuesday, the 22nd June, and the trial was to be commenced on the following Thursday. And there was present in the room, very conspicuously, an old heavy grey greatcoat, as to which Mr. Wickerby had instructed Mr. Chaffanbrass that evidence was forthcoming, if needed, to prove that that coat was lying on the night of the murder in a downstairs room in the house in which Yosef Mealyus was then lodging. The reader will remember the history of the coat.

Instigated by Madame Goesler, who was still absent from England, Mr. Wickerby had traced the coat, and had purchased the coat, and was in a position to prove that this very coat was the coat which Mr. Meager had brought home with him to Northumberland Street on that day. But Mr. Wickerby was of opinion that the coat had better not be used. "It does not go far enough," said Mr. Wickerby. "It don't go very far, certainly," said Mr. Chaffanbrass. "And if you try to show that another man has done it, and he has n't," said Mr. Wickerby, "it always tells against you with a jury." To this Mr. Chaffanbrass made no reply, preferring to form his own opinion, and to keep it to himself when formed. But in obedience to his instructions, Lord Fawn was asked to attend at Mr. Wickerby's chambers, in the cause of truth, and the coat was brought out on the occasion. "Was that the sort of coat the man wore, my lord?" said Mr. Chaffanbrass, as Mr. Wickerby held up the coat to view. Lord Fawn walked round and round the coat, and looked at it very carefully before he would vouchsafe a reply. "You see it is a grey coat," said Mr. Chaffanbrass, not speaking at all in the tone which Mr. Wickerby's note had induced Lord Fawn to expect.

"It is grey," said Lord Fawn.

"Perhaps it 's not the same shade of grey, Lord Fawn. You see, my lord, we are most anxious not to impute guilt where guilt does n't lie. You are a witness for the Crown, and, of course, you will tell the Crown lawyers all that passes here. Were it possible, we would make this little preliminary inquiry in their presence;—but we can hardly do that. Mr. Finn's coat was a very much smaller coat."

"I should think it was," said his lordship, who did not like being questioned about coats.

"You don't think the coat the man wore when you saw him was a big coat like that? You think he wore a little coat?"

"He wore a grey coat," said Lord Fawn.

"This is grey;—a coat should n't be greyer than that."

"I don't think Lord Fawn should be asked any more questions on the matter till he gives his evidence in court," said Mr. Camperdown.

"A man's life depends on it, Mr. Camperdown," said the barrister. "It is n't a matter of cross-examination. If I bring that coat into court I must make a charge against another man by the very act of doing so. And I will not do so unless I believe that other man to be guilty. It 's an inquiry I can't postpone till we are before the jury. It is n't that I want to trump up a case against another man for the sake of extricating my client on a false issue. Lord Fawn does n't want to hang Mr. Finn if Mr. Finn be not guilty."

"God forbid!" said his lordship.

"Mr. Finn could n't have worn that coat, or a coat at all like it."

"What is it you do want to learn, Mr. Chaffanbrass?" asked Mr. Camperdown.

"Just put on the coat, Mr. Scruby." Then at the order of the barrister, Mr. Scruby, the attorney's clerk, did put on Mr. Meager's old greatcoat, and walked about the room in it. "Walk quick," said Mr. Chaffanbrass;—and the clerk did "walk quick." He was a stout, thick-set little man, nearly half a foot shorter

than Phineas Finn. "Is that at all like the figure?" asked Mr. Chaffanbrass.

"I think it is like the figure," said Lord Fawn.

"And like the coat?"

"It 's the same colour as the coat."

"You would n't swear it was not the coat?"

"I am not on my oath at all, Mr. Chaffanbrass."

"No, my lord;—but to me your word is as good as your oath. If you think it possible that was the coat——"

"I don't think anything about it at all. When Mr. Scruby hurries down the room in that way he looks as the man looked when he was hurrying under the lamp-post. I am not disposed to say any more at present."

"It 's a matter of regret to me that Lord Fawn should have come here at all," said Mr. Camperdown, who had been summoned to meet his client at the chambers, but had come with him.

"I suppose his lordship wishes us to know all that he knew, seeing that it 's a question of hanging the right man or the wrong one. I never heard such trash in my life. Take it off, Mr. Scruby, and let the police-man keep it. I understand Lord Fawn to say that the man's figure was about the same as yours. My client, I believe, stands about twelve inches taller. Thank you, my lord;—we shall get at the truth at last, I don't doubt." It was afterwards said that Mr. Chaffanbrass's conduct had been very improper in enticing Lord Fawn to Mr. Wickerby's chambers; but Mr. Chaffan-brass never cared what any one said. "I don't know that we can make much of it," he said, when he and Mr. Wickerby were alone, "but it may be as well to

bring it into court. It would prove nothing against the Jew even if that fellow,"—he meant Lord Fawn,—"could be made to swear that the coat worn was exactly similar to this. I am thinking now about the height."

"I don't doubt but you 'll get him off."

"Well;—I may do so. They ought not to hang any man on such evidence as there is against him, even though there were no moral doubt of his guilt. There is nothing really to connect Mr. Phineas Finn with the murder,—nothing tangible. But there is no saying now-a-days what a jury will do. Juries depend a great deal more on the judge than they used to do. If I were on trial for my life, I don't think I 'd have counsel at all."

"No one could defend you as well as yourself, Mr. Chaffanbrass."

"I did n't mean that. No;—I should n't defend myself. I should say to the judge, 'My lord, I don't doubt the jury will do just as you tell them, and you 'll form your own opinion quite independent of the arguments.'"

"You 'd be hung, Mr. Chaffanbrass."

"No; I don't know that I should," said Mr. Chaffanbrass slowly. "I don't think I could affront a judge of the present day into hanging me. They 've too much of what I call thick-skinned honesty for that. It 's the temper of the time to resent nothing,—to be mealy-mouthed and mealy-hearted. Jurymen are afraid of having their own opinion, and almost always shirk a verdict when they can."

"But we do get verdicts."

"Yes; the judges give them. And they are mealy-

mouthed verdicts, tending to equalise crime and innocence, and to make men think that after all it may be a question whether fraud is violence, which, after all, is manly, and to feel that we cannot afford to hate dishonesty. It was a bad day for the commercial world, Mr. Wickerby, when forgery ceased to be capital."

"It was a horrid thing to hang a man for writing another man's name to a receipt for thirty shillings."

"We did n't do it, but the fact that the law held certain frauds to be hanging matters operated on the minds of men in regard to all fraud. What with the joint-stock working of companies, and the confusion between directors who know nothing and managers who know everything, and the dislike of juries to tread upon people's corns, you can't punish dishonest trading. Caveat emptor is the only motto going, and the worst proverb that ever came from dishonest stony-hearted Rome. With such a matter as that to guide us, no man dare trust his brother. Caveat lex,—and let the man who cheats cheat at his peril."

"You 'd give the law a great deal to do."

"Much less than at present. What does your Caveat emptor come to? That every seller tries to pick the eyes out of the head of the purchaser. Sooner or later the law must interfere, and Caveat emptor falls to the ground. I bought a horse the other day; my daughter wanted something to look pretty, and like an old ass as I am I gave a hundred and fifty pounds for the brute. When he came home he was n't worth a feed of corn."

"You had a warranty, I suppose?"

"No, indeed! Did you ever hear of such an old fool?"

"I should have thought any dealer would have taken him back for the sake of his character."

"Any dealer would; but—I bought him of a gentleman."

"Mr. Chaffanbrass!"

"I ought to have known better, ought n't I? Caveat emptor."

"It was just giving away your money, you know."

"A great deal worse than that. I could have given the—gentleman—a hundred and fifty pounds, and not have minded it much. I ought to have had the horse killed, and gone to a dealer for another. Instead of that,—I went to an attorney."

"Oh, Mr. Chaffanbrass;—the idea of your going to an attorney."

"I did then. I never had so much honest truth told me in my life."

"By an attorney!"

"He said that he did think I 'd been born long enough to have known better than that! I pleaded on my own behalf that the gentleman said the horse was all right. 'Gentleman!' exclaimed my friend. 'You go to a gentleman for a horse; you buy a horse from a gentleman without a warranty; and then you come to me! Did n't you ever hear of Caveat emptor, Mr. Chaffanbrass? What can I do for you?' That 's what my friend, the attorney, said to me."

"And what came of it, Mr. Chaffanbrass? Arbitration, I should say?"

"Just that;—with the horse eating his head off every meal at ever so much per week,—till at last I fairly gave in from sheer vexation. So the—gentleman—got my money, and I added something to my stock of ex-

perience. Of course, that 's only my story, and it may be that the gentleman could tell it another way. But I say that if my story be right, the doctrine of Caveat emptor does not encourage trade. I don't know how we got to all this from Mr. Finn. I 'm to see him to-morrow."

"Yes;—he is very anxious to speak to you."

"What 's the use of it, Wickerby? I hate seeing a client. What comes of it?"

"Of course he wants to tell his own story."

"But I don't want to hear his own story. What good will his own story do me? He 'll tell me either one of two things. He 'll swear he did n't murder the man——"

"That 's what he 'll say."

"Which can have no effect upon me one way or the other; or else he 'll say that he did,—which would cripple me altogether."

"He won't say that, Mr. Chaffanbrass."

"There 's no knowing what they 'll say. A man will go on swearing by his God that he is innocent, till at last, in a moment of emotion, he breaks down, and out comes the truth. In such a case as this I do not in the least want to know the truth about the murder."

"This is what the public wants to know."

"Because the public is ignorant. The public should not wish to know anything of the kind. What we should all wish to get at is the truth of the evidence about the murder. The man is to be hung not because he committed the murder,—as to which no positive knowledge is attainable; but because he has been proved to have committed the murder,—as to which proof, though it be enough for hanging, there must

always be attached some shadow of doubt. We were delighted to hang Palmer,—but we don't know that he killed Cook. A learned man who knew more about it than we can know seemed to think that he did n't. Now the last man to give us any useful insight into the evidence is the prisoner himself. In nineteen cases out of twenty a man tried for murder in this country committed the murder for which he is tried."

"There really seems to be a doubt in this case."

"I dare say. If there be only nineteen guilty out of twenty, there must be one innocent; and why not Mr. Phineas Finn? But, if it be so, he, burning with the sense of injustice, thinks that everybody should see it as he sees it. He is to be tried, because on investigation, everybody sees it just in a different light. In such case he is unfortunate, but he can't assist me in liberating him from his misfortune. He sees what is patent and clear to him,—that he walked home that night without meddling with any one. But I can't see that, or make others see it, because he sees it."

"His manner of telling you may do something."

"If it do, Mr. Wickerby, it is because I am unfit for my business. If he have the gift of protesting well, I am to think him innocent; and, therefore, to think him guilty, if he be unprovided with such eloquence! I will neither believe or disbelieve anything that a client says to me,—unless he confess his guilt, in which case my services can be but of little avail. Of course I shall see him, as he asks it. We had better meet then,—say at half-past ten." Whereupon Mr. Wickerby wrote to the governor of the prison begging that Phineas Finn might be informed of the visit.

Phineas had now been in gaol between six and seven

weeks, and the very fact of his incarceration had nearly broken his spirits. Two of his sisters, who had come from Ireland to be near him, saw him every day, and his two friends, Mr. Low and Lord Chiltern, were very frequently with him; Lady Laura Kennedy had not come to him again; but he heard from her frequently through Barrington Erle. Lord Chiltern rarely spoke of his sister,—alluding to her merely in connection with her father and her late husband. Presents still came to him from various quarters,—as to which he hardly knew whence they came. But the Duchess and Lady Chiltern and Lady Laura all catered for him,—while Mrs. Bunce looked after his wardrobe, and saw that he was not cut down to prison allowance of clean shirts and socks. But the only friend whom he recognised as such was the friend who would freely declare a conviction of his innocence. They allowed him books and pens and paper, and even cards, if he chose to play at patience with them or build castles. The paper and pens he could use because he could write about himself. From day to day he composed a diary in which he was never tired of expatiating on the terrible injustice of his position. But he could not read. He found it to be impossible to fix his attention on matters outside himself. He assured himself from hour to hour that it was not death he feared,—not even death from the hangman's hand. It was the condemnation of those who had known him that was so terrible to him; —the feeling that they with whom he had aspired to work and live, the leading men and women of his day, ministers of the Government and their wives, statesmen and their daughters, peers and members of the House in which he himself had sat;—that these should

think that before all he had been a base adventurer unworthy of their society! That was the sorrow that broke him down, and drew him to confess that his whole life had been a failure.

Mr. Low had advised him not to see Mr. Chaffanbrass;—but he had persisted in declaring that there were instructions which no one but himself could give to the counsellor whose duty it would be to defend him at the trial. Mr. Chaffanbrass came at the hour fixed, and with him came Mr. Wickerby. The old barrister bowed courteously as he entered the prison room, and the attorney introduced the two gentlemen with more than all the courtesy of the outer world. "I am sorry to see you here, Mr. Finn," said the barrister.

"It 's a bad lodging, Mr. Chaffanbrass, but the term will soon be over. I am thinking a good deal more of my next abode."

"It has to be thought of, certainly," said the barrister. "Let us hope that it may be all that you would wish it to be. My services shall not be wanting to make it so."

"We are doing all we can, Mr. Finn," said Mr. Wickerby.

"Mr. Chaffanbrass," said Phineas, "there is one special thing that I want you to do." The old man, having his own idea as to what was coming, laid one of his hands over the other, bowed his head and looked meek. "I want you to make men believe that I am innocent of this crime."

This was better than Mr. Chaffanbrass expected. "I trust that we may succeed in making twelve men believe it," said he.

"Comparatively I do not care a straw for the twelve men. It is not to them especially that I am anxious that you should address yourself——"

"But that will be my bounden duty, Mr. Finn."

"I can well believe, sir, that though I have myself been bred a lawyer, I may not altogether understand the nature of an advocate's duty to his client. But I would wish something more to be done than what you intimate."

"The duty of an advocate defending a prisoner is to get a verdict of acquittal if he can, and to use his own discretion in making the attempt."

"But I want something more to be attempted, even if in the struggle something less be achieved. I have known men to be so acquitted that every man in court believed them to be guilty."

"No doubt;—and such men have probably owed much to their advocates."

"It is not such a debt that I wish to owe. I know my own innocence."

"Mr. Chaffanbrass takes that for granted," said Mr. Wickerby.

"To me it is a matter of astonishment that any human being should believe me to have committed this murder. I am lost in surprise when I remember that I am here simply because I walked home from my club with a loaded stick in my pocket. The magistrate, I suppose, thought me guilty."

"He did not think about it, Mr. Finn. He went by the evidence;—the quarrel, your position in the streets at the time, the colour of the coat you wore and that of the coat worn by the man whom Lord Fawn saw in the street; the doctor's evidence as to the blows

by which the man was killed; and the nature of the weapon which you carried. He put these things together, and they were enough to entitle the public to demand that a jury should decide. He did n't say you were guilty. He only said that the circumstances were sufficient to justify a trial."

"If he thought me innocent he would not have sent me here."

"Yes, he would;—if the evidence required that he should do so."

"We will not argue about that, Mr. Chaffanbrass."

"Certainly not, Mr. Finn."

"Here I am, and to-morrow I shall be tried for my life. My life will be nothing to me unless it can be made clear to all the world that I am innocent. I would be sooner hung for this,—with the certainty at my heart that all England on the next day would ring with the assurance of my innocence, than be acquitted and afterwards be looked upon as a murderer." Phineas, when he was thus speaking, had stepped out into the middle of the room, and stood with his head thrown back, and his right hand forward. Mr. Chaffanbrass, who was himself an ugly, dirty old man, who had always piqued himself on being indifferent to appearance, found himself struck by the beauty and grace of the man whom he now saw for the first time. And he was struck, too, by his client's eloquence, though he had expressly declared to the attorney that it was his duty to be superior to any such influence. "Oh, Mr. Chaffanbrass, for the love of Heaven, let there be no quibbling."

"We never quibble, I hope, Mr. Finn."

"No subterfuges, no escaping by a side wind, no

"My life will be nothing to me unless it can be made clear to all the world that I am innocent."

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advantage taken of little forms, no objection taken to this and that as though delay would avail us anything."

"Character will go a great way, we hope."

"It should go for nothing. Though no one would speak a word for me, still am I innocent. Of course the truth will be known some day."

"I am not so sure of that, Mr. Finn."

"It will certainly be known some day. That it should not be known as yet is my misfortune. But in defending me I would have you hurl defiance at my accusers. I had the stick in my pocket,—having heretofore been concerned with ruffians in the street. I did quarrel with the man, having been insulted by him at the club. The coat which I wore was such as they say. But does that make a murderer of me?"

"Somebody did the deed, and that somebody could probably say all that you say."

"No, sir;—he, when he is known, will be found to have been skulking in the streets; he will have thrown away his weapon; he will have been secret in his movements; he will have hidden his face, and have been a murderer in more than the deed. When they came to me in the morning did it seem to them that I was a murderer? Has my life been like that? They who have really known me cannot believe that I have been guilty. They who have not known me, and do believe, will live to learn their error."

He then sat down and listened patiently while the old lawyer described to him the nature of the case,—wherein lay his danger, and wherein what hope there was of safety. There was no evidence against him other than circumstantial evidence, and both judges and jury were wont to be unwilling to accept such,

when uncorroborated, as sufficient in cases of life and death. Unfortunately, in this case the circumstantial evidence was very strong against him. But, on the other hand, his character, as to which men of great mark would speak with enthusiasm, would be made to stand very high. "I would not have it made to stand higher than it is," said Phineas. As to the opinion of the world afterwards, Mr. Chaffanbrass went on to say, of that he must take his chance. But surely he himself might fight better for it living than any friend could do for him after his death. "You must believe me in this, Mr. Finn, that a verdict of acquittal from the jury is the one object that we must have before us."

"The one object that I shall have before me is the verdict of the public," said Phineas. "I am treated with so much injustice in being thought a murderer that they can hardly add anything to it by hanging me."

When Mr. Chaffanbrass left the prison he walked back with Mr. Wickerby to the attorney's chambers in Hatton Garden, and he lingered for a while on the Viaduct expressing his opinion of his client. "He 's not a bad fellow, Wickerby."

"A very good sort of fellow, Mr. Chaffanbrass."

"I never did,—and I never will,—express an opinion of my own as to the guilt or innocence of a client till after the trial is over. But I have sometimes felt as though I would give the blood out of my veins to save a man. I never felt in that way more strongly than I do now."

"It 'll make me very unhappy, I know, if it goes against him," said Mr. Wickerby.

"People think that the special branch of the profes-

sion into which I have chanced to fall is a very low one,—and I do not know whether, if the world were before me again, I would allow myself to drift into an exclusive practice in criminal courts."

"Yours has been a very useful life, Mr. Chaffanbrass."

"But I often feel," continued the barrister, paying no attention to the attorney's last remark, "that my work touches the heart more nearly than does that of gentlemen who have to deal with matters of property and of high social claims. People think I am savage, —savage to witnesses."

"You can frighten a witness, Mr. Chaffanbrass."

"It 's just the trick of the trade that you learn, as a girl learns the notes of her piano. There 's nothing in it. You forget it all the next hour. But when a man has been hung whom you have striven to save, you do remember that. Good morning, Mr. Wickerby. I 'll be there a little before ten. Perhaps you may have to speak to me."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BEGINNING OF THE TRIAL.

The task of seeing an important trial at the Old Bailey is by no means a pleasant business, unless you be what the denizens of the court would call "one of the swells,"—so as to enjoy the privilege of being a bench-fellow with the judge on the seat of judgment. And even in that case the pleasure is not unalloyed. You have, indeed, the gratification of seeing the man whom all the world has been talking about for the last nine days face to face, and of being seen in a position which causes you to be acknowledged as a man of mark; but the intolerable stenches of the court and its horrid heat come up to you there, no doubt, as powerfully as they fall on those below. And then the tedium of a prolonged trial, in which the points of interest are apt to be few and far between, grows upon you till you begin to feel that though the Prime Minister who is out should murder the Prime Minister who is in, and all the members of the two Cabinets were to be called in evidence, you would not attend the trial, though the seat of honour next to the judge were accorded to you. Those bewigged ones, who are the performers, are so insufferably long in their parts, so arrogant in their bearing,—so it strikes you, though doubtless the fashion of working has been found to be efficient for the purposes they have in hand,—and so uninteresting in their repetition, that you first admire, and then question,

and at last execrate the imperturbable patience of the judge, who might, as you think, force the thing through in a quarter of the time without any injury to justice. And it will probably strike you that the length of the trial is proportioned not to the complicity but to the importance, or rather to the public interest, of the case, —so that the trial which has been suggested of a disappointed and bloody-minded ex-Prime Minister would certainly take at least a fortnight, even though the Speaker of the House of Commons and the Lord Chancellor had seen the blow struck, whereas a collier may knock his wife's brains out in the dark and be sent to the gallows with a trial that shall not last three hours. And yet the collier has to be hung,—if found guilty,—and no one thinks that his life is improperly endangered by reckless haste. Whether lives may not be improperly saved by the more lengthened process is another question.

But the honours of such bench-fellowship can be accorded but to few, and the task becomes very tiresome when the spectator has to enter the court as an ordinary mortal. There are two modes open to him, either of which is subject to grievous penalties. If he be the possessor of a decent coat and hat, and can scrape any acquaintance with any one concerned, he may get introduced to that overworked and greatly perplexed official, the under-sheriff, who will stave him off if possible,—knowing that even an under-sheriff cannot make space elastic,—but, if the introduction has been acknowledged as good, will probably find a seat for him if he persevere to the end. But the seat when obtained must be kept in possession from morning to evening, and the fight must be renewed from

day to day. And the benches are hard, and the space is narrow, and you feel that the under-sheriff would prod you with his sword if you ventured to sneeze, or to put to your lips the flask which you have in your pocket. And then, when all the bench-fellows go out to lunch at half-past one, and you are left to eat your dry sandwich without room for your elbows, a feeling of unsatisfied ambition will pervade you. It is all very well to be the friend of an under-sheriff, but if you could but have known the judge, or have been a cousin of the real sheriff, how different it might have been with you!

But you may be altogether independent, and, as a matter of right, walk into an open English court of law as one of the British public. You will have to stand, of course,—and to commence standing very early in the morning, if you intend to succeed in witnessing any portion of the performance. And when you have made once good your entrance as one of the British public, you are apt to be a good deal knocked about, not only by your public brethren, but also by those who have to keep the avenues free for witnesses, and who will regard you from first to last as a disagreeable excrescence on the officialities of the work on hand. Upon the whole it may be better for you, perhaps, to stay at home and read the record of the affair as given in the next day's Times. Impartial reporters, judicious readers, and able editors between them will preserve for you all the kernel, and will save you from the necessity of having to deal with the shell.

At this trial there were, among the crowd who succeeded in entering the court, three persons of our acquaintance who had resolved to overcome the various

difficulties. Mr. Monk, who had formerly been a Cabinet Minister, was seated on the bench,—subject, indeed, to the heat and stenches, but privileged to eat the lunch. Mr. Quintus Slide, of the People's Banner, —who knew the court well, for in former days he had worked many an hour in it as a reporter,—had obtained the good graces of the under-sheriff. And Mr. Bunce, with all the energy of the British public, had forced his way in among the crowd, and had managed to wedge himself near to the dock, so that he might be able by a hoist of the neck to see his lodger as he stood at the bar. Of these three men, Bunce was assured that the prisoner was innocent,—led to such assurance partly by belief in the man, and partly by an innate spirit of opposition to all exercise of restrictive power. Mr. Quintus Slide was certain of the prisoner's guilt, and gave himself considerable credit for having assisted in running down the criminal. It seemed to be natural to Mr. Quintus Slide that a man who had openly quarrelled with the editor of the People's Banner should come to the gallows. Mr. Monk, as Phineas himself well knew, had doubted. He had received the suspected murderer into his warmest friendship, and was made miserable even by his doubts. Since the circumstances of the case had come to his knowledge, they had weighed upon his mind so as to sadden his whole life. But he was a man who could not make his reason subordinate to his feelings. If the evidence against his friend was strong enough to send his friend for trial, how should he dare to discredit the evidence because the man was his friend? He had visited Phineas in prison, and Phineas had accused him of doubting. "You need not answer me," the unhappy man had

said, "but do not come unless you are able to tell me from your heart that you are sure of my innocence. There is no person living who could comfort me by such assurance as you could do." Mr. Monk had thought about it very much, but he had not repeated his visit.

At a quarter past ten the chief-justice was on the bench, with a second judge to help him, and with lords and distinguished commoners and great City magnates crowding the long seat between him and the doorway; the court was full, so that you would say that another head could not be made to appear; and Phineas Finn, the member for Tankerville, was in the dock. Barrington Erle, who was there to see,—as one of the great ones, of course,—told the Duchess of Omnium that night that Phineas was thin and pale, and in many respects an altered man,—but handsomer than ever.

"He bore himself well?" asked the Duchess.

"Very well,—very well indeed. We were there for six hours, and he maintained the same demeanour throughout. He never spoke but once, and that was when Chaffanbrass began his fight about the jury."

"What did he say?"

"He addressed the judge, interrupting Slope, who was arguing that some man would make a very good juryman, and declared that it was not by his wish that any objection was raised against any gentleman."

"What did the judge say?"

"Told him to abide by his counsel. The chief-justice was civil to him,—indeed better than civil."

"We'll have him down to Matching, and make ever so much of him," said the Duchess.

"Don't go too fast, Duchess, for he may have to hang poor Phineas yet."

"Oh dear! I wish you would n't use that word. But what did he say?"

"He told Finn that as he had thought fit to employ counsel for his defence,—in doing which he had undoubtedly acted wisely,—he must leave the case to the discretion of his counsel."

"And then poor Phineas was silenced?"

"He spoke another word. 'My lord,' said he, 'I for my part wish that the first twelve men on the list might be taken.' But old Chaffanbrass went on just the same. It took them two hours and a half before they could swear a jury."

"But, Mr. Erle,—taking it altogether,—which way is it going?"

"Nobody can even guess as yet. There was ever so much delay besides that about the jury. It seemed that somebody had called him Phinees instead of Phineas, and that took half an hour. They begin with the quarrel at the club, and are to call the first witness to-morrow morning. They are to examine Rattler about the quarrel, and Fitzgibbon and Monk, and, I believe, old Bouncer, the man who writes, you know. They all heard what took place."

"So did you?"

"I have managed to escape that. They can't very well examine all the club. But I shall be called afterwards as to what took place at the door. They will begin with Rattler."

"Everybody knows there was a quarrel, and that Mr. Bonteen had been drinking, and that he behaved as badly as a man could behave."

"It must all be proved, Duchess."

"I 'll tell you what, Mr. Erle. If,—if,—if this ends

badly for Mr. Finn, I 'll wear mourning to the day of my death. I 'll go to the Drawing-Room in mourning, to show what I think of it."

Lord Chiltern, who was also on the bench, took his account of the trial home to his wife and sister in Portman Square. At this time Miss Palliser was staying with them, and the three ladies were together when the account was brought to them. In that house it was taken as doctrine that Phineas Finn was innocent. In the presence of her brother, and before her sister-in-law's visitor, Lady Laura had learned to be silent on the subject, and she now contented herself with listening, knowing that she could relieve herself by speech when alone with Lady Chiltern. "I never knew anything so tedious in my life," said the master of the Brake hounds. "They have not done anything yet."

"I suppose they have made their speeches?" said his wife.

"Sir Gregory Grogram opened the case, as they call it; and a very strong case he made of it. I never believe anything that a lawyer says when he has a wig on his head and a fee in his hand. I prepare myself beforehand to regard it all as mere words, supplied at so much the thousand. I know he 'll say whatever he thinks most likely to forward his own views. But upon my word he put it very strongly. He brought it all within so very short a space of time! Bonteen and Finn left the club within a minute of each other. Bonteen must have been at the top of the passage five minutes afterwards, and Phineas at that moment could not have been above two hundred yards from him. There can be no doubt of that."

"Oswald, you don't mean to say that it 's going against him!" exclaimed Lady Chiltern.

"It 's not going any way at present. The witnesses have not been examined. But so far, I suppose, the attorney-general was right. He has got to prove it all, but so much no doubt he can prove. He can prove that the man was killed with some blunt weapon, such as Finn had. And he can prove that exactly at the same time a man was running to the spot very like Finn, and that by a route which would not have been his route, but by using which he could have placed himself at that moment where the man was seen."

"How very dreadful!" said Miss Palliser.

"And yet I feel that I know it was that other man," said Lady Chiltern. Lady Laura sat silent through it all, listening with her eyes intent on her brother's face, with her elbow on the table and her brow on her hand. She did not speak a word till she found herself alone with her sister-in-law, and then it was hardly more than a word. "Violet, they will murder him!" Lady Chiltern endeavoured to comfort her, telling her that as yet they had heard but one side of the case; but the wretched woman only shook her head. "I know they will murder him," she said, "and then when it is too late they will find out what they have done!"

On the following day the crowd in court was, if possible, greater, so that the bench-fellows were very much squeezed indeed. But it was impossible to exclude from the high seat such men as Mr. Rattler and Lord Fawn when they were required in the court as witnesses;—and not a man who had obtained a seat on the first day was willing to be excluded on the

second. And even then the witnesses were not called at once. Sir Gregory Grogram began the work of the day by saying that he had heard that morning for the first time that one of his witnesses had been,—"tampered with" was the word that he unfortunately used,—by his learned friend on the other side. He alluded, of course, to Lord Fawn, and poor Lord Fawn, sitting up there on the seat of honour, visible to all the world, became very hot and very uncomfortable. Then there arose a vehement dispute between Sir Gregory, assisted by Sir Simon, and old Mr. Chaffanbrass, who rejected with disdain any assistance from the gentlemen who were with him. "Tampered with! That word should be recalled by the honourable gentleman who was at the head of the Bar, or—or——" Had Mr. Chaffanbrass declared that as an alternative he would pull the court about their ears, it would have been no more than he meant. Lord Fawn had been invited,—not summoned to attend; and why? In order that no suspicion of guilt might be thrown on another man, unless the knowledge that was in Lord Fawn's bosom, and there alone, would justify such a line of defence. Lord Fawn had been attended by his own solicitor, and might have brought the attorney-general with him had he so pleased. There was a great deal said on both sides, and something said also by the judge. At last Sir Gregory withdrew the objectionable word, and substituted in lieu of it an assertion that his witness had been "indiscreetly questioned." Mr. Chaffanbrass would not for a moment admit the indiscretion, but bounced about in his place, tearing his wig almost off his head, and defying every one in the court. The judge submitted to Mr. Chaffanbrass that he had been

indiscreet. "I never contradicted the Bench yet, my lord," said Mr. Chaffanbrass—at which there was a general titter throughout the Bar,—"but I must claim the privilege of conducting my own practice according to my own views. In this court I am subject to the Bench. In my own chamber I am subject only to the law of the land." The judge, looking over his spectacles, said a mild word about the profession at large. Mr. Chaffanbrass, twisting his wig quite on one side, so that it nearly fell on Mr. Sergeant Birdbott's face, muttered something as to having seen more work done in that court than any other living lawyer, let his rank be what it might. When the little affair was over, everybody felt that Sir Gregory had been vanquished.

Mr. Rattler, and Laurence Fitzgibbon, and Mr. Monk, and Mr. Bouncer were examined about the quarrel at the club, and proved that the quarrel had been a very bitter quarrel. They all agreed that Mr. Bonteen had been wrong, and that the prisoner had had cause for anger. Of the three distinguished legislators and statesmen above named, Mr. Chaffanbrass refused to take the slightest notice. "I have no question to put to you," he said to Mr. Rattler. "Of course there was a quarrel. We all know that." But he did ask a question or two of Mr. Bouncer. "You write books, I think, Mr. Bouncer?"

"I do," said Mr. Bouncer, with dignity. Now there was no peculiarity in a witness to which Mr. Chaffanbrass was so much opposed as an assumption of dignity.

"What sort of books, Mr. Bouncer?"

"I write novels," said Mr. Bouncer, feeling that Mr. Chaffanbrass must have been ignorant indeed of the

polite literature of the day to make such a question necessary.

"You mean fiction."

"Well, yes; fiction,—if you like that word better."

"I don't like either, particularly. You have to find plots, have n't you?"

Mr. Bouncer paused a moment. "Yes, yes," he said. "In writing a novel it is necessary to construct a plot."

"Where do you get 'em from?"

"Where do I get 'em from?"

"Yes,—where do you find them? You take them from the French mostly;—don't you?" Mr. Bouncer became very red. "Is n't that the way our English writers get their plots?"

"Sometimes,—perhaps."

"Yours ain't French then?"

"Well;—no;—that is—— I won't undertake to say that—that——"

"You won' undertake to say that they 're not French."

"Is this relevant to the case before us, Mr. Chaffanbrass?" asked the judge.

"Quite so, my lud. We have a highly distinguished novelist before us, my lud, who, as I have reason to believe, is intimately acquainted with the French system of the construction of plots. It is a business which the French carry to perfection. The plot of a novel should, I imagine, be constructed in accordance with human nature?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Bouncer.

"You have murders in novels?"

"Sometimes," said Mr. Bouncer, who had himself done many murders in his time.

"Did you ever know a French novelist have a pre-

meditated murder committed by a man who could not possibly have conceived the murder ten minutes before he committed it;—with whom the cause of the murder anteceded the murder no more than ten minutes?" Mr. Bouncer stood thinking for a while. "We will give you your time, because an answer to the question from you will be important testimony."

"I don't think I do," said Mr. Bouncer, who in his confusion had been quite unable to think of the plot of a single novel.

"And if there were such a French plot, that would not be the plot that you would borrow?"

"Certainly not," said Mr. Bouncer.

"Did you ever read poetry, Mr. Bouncer?"

"Oh yes;—I read a great deal of poetry."

"Shakespeare, perhaps?" Mr. Bouncer did not condescend to do more than nod his head. "There is a murder described in 'Hamlet.' Was that supposed by the poet to have been devised suddenly?"

"I should say not."

"So should I, Mr. Bouncer. Do you remember the arrangements for the murder in 'Macbeth'? That took a little time in concocting;—did n't it?"

"No doubt it did."

"And when Othello murdered Desdemona, creeping up to her in her sleep, he had been thinking of it for some time?"

"I suppose he had."

"Do you ever read English novels as well as French, Mr. Bouncer?" The unfortunate author again nodded his head. "When Amy Robsart was lured to her death, there was some time given to the preparation, —eh?"

"Of course there was."

"Of course there was. And Eugene Aram, when he murdered a man in Bulwer's novel, turned the matter over in his mind before he did it?"

"He was thinking a long time about it, I believe."

"Thinking about it a long time! I rather think he was. Those great masters of human nature, those men who knew the human heart, did not venture to describe a secret murder as coming from a man's brain without premeditation?"

"Not that I can remember."

"Such also is my impression. But now, I bethink me of a murder that was almost as sudden as this is supposed to have been. Did n't a Dutch smuggler murder a Scotch lawyer, all in a moment as it were?"

"Dirk Hatteraick did murder Glossop in 'The Antiquary,' very suddenly;—but he did it from passion."

"Just so, Mr. Bouncer. There was no plot there, was there? No arrangement; no secret creeping up to his victim; no escape even?"

"He was chained."

"So he was; chained like a dog;—and like a dog he flew at his enemy. If I understand you, then, Mr. Bouncer, you would not dare so to violate probability in a novel, as to produce a murderer to the public who should contrive a secret hidden murder,—contrive it and execute it, all within a quarter of an hour?"

Mr. Bouncer, after another minute's consideration, said that he thought he would not do so. "Mr. Bouncer," said Mr. Chaffanbrass, "I am uncommonly obliged to our excellent friend, Sir Gregory, for having given us the advantage of your evidence."

CHAPTER IX.

LORD FAWN'S EVIDENCE.

A CROWD of witnesses were heard on the second day, after Mr. Chaffanbrass had done with Mr. Bouncer, but none of them were of much interest to the public. The three doctors were examined as to the state of the dead man's head when he was picked up, and as to the nature of the instrument with which he had probably been killed; and the fact of Phineas Finn's life-preserver was proved,—in the middle of which he begged that the court would save itself some little trouble, as he was quite ready to acknowledge that he had walked home with the short bludgeon, which was then produced, in his pocket. "We would acknowledge a great deal if they would let us," said Mr. Chaffanbrass. "We acknowledge the quarrel, we acknowledge the walk home at night, we acknowledge the bludgeon, and we acknowledge a grey coat." But that happened towards the close of the second day, and they had not then reached the grey coat. The question of the grey coat was commenced on the third morning,—on the Saturday,—which day, as was well known, would be opened with the examination of Lord Fawn. The anxiety to hear Lord Fawn undergo his penance was intense, and had been greatly increased by the conviction that Mr. Chaffanbrass would resent upon him the charge made by the attorney-general as to tampering with a witness. "I 'll tamper with him by-and-by," Mr. Chaff-

anbrass had whispered to Mr. Wickerby, and the whispered threat had been spread abroad. On the table before Mr. Chaffanbrass, when he took his place in the court on the Saturday, was laid a heavy grey coat, and on the opposite side of the table, just before the solicitor-general, was laid another grey coat, of much lighter material. When Lord Fawn saw the two coats as he took his seat on the bench, his heart failed him.

He was hardly allowed to seat himself before he was called upon to be sworn. Sir Simon Slope, who was to examine him, took it for granted that his lordship could give his evidence from his place on the bench, but to this Mr. Chaffanbrass objected. He was very well aware, he said, that such a practice was usual. He did not doubt but that in his time he had examined some hundreds of witnesses from the bench. In nineteen cases out of twenty there could be no objection to such a practice. But in this case the noble lord would have to give evidence not only as to what he had seen, but as to what he then saw. It would be expedient that he should see colours as nearly as possible in the same light as the jury, which he would do if he stood in the witness-box. And there might arise questions of identity, in speaking of which it would be well that the noble lord should be as near as possible to the thing or person to be identified. He was afraid that he must trouble the noble lord to come down from the Elysium of the bench. Whereupon Lord Fawn descended, and was sworn in at the witness-box.

His treatment from Sir Simon Slope was all that was due from a solicitor-general to a distinguished peer who was a member of the same Government as himself. Sir Simon put his questions so as almost to reassure the

witness; and very quickly,—only too quickly,—obtained from him all the information that was needed on the side of the prosecution. Lord Fawn, when he had left the club, had seen both Mr. Bonteen and Mr. Finn preparing to follow him, but he had gone alone, and had never seen Mr. Bonteen since. He walked very slowly down into Curzon Street and Bolton Row, and when there, as he was about to cross the road at the top of Clarges Street,—as he believed just as he was crossing the street,—he saw a man come at a very fast pace out of the mews which runs into Bolton Row, opposite to Clarges Street, and from thence hurry very quickly towards the passage which separates the gardens of Devonshire and Landsdowne Houses. It had already been proved that had Phineas Finn retraced his steps after Erle and Fitzgibbon had turned their backs upon him, his shortest and certainly most private way to the spot on which Lord Fawn had seen the man would have been by the mews in question. Lord Fawn went on to say that the man wore a grey coat,—as far as he could judge it was such a coat as Sir Simon now showed him; he could not at all identify the prisoner; he could not say whether the man he had seen was as tall as the prisoner; he thought that as far as he could judge, there was not much difference in the height. He had not thought of Mr. Finn when he saw the man hurrying along, nor had he troubled his mind about the man. That was the end of Lord Fawn's evidence-in-chief, which he would gladly have prolonged to the close of the day could he thereby have postponed the coming horrors of his cross-examination. But there he was,—in the clutches of the odius, dirty little man, hating the little man, despising him because he was

dirty, and nothing better than an Old Bailey barrister, —and yet fearing him with so intense a fear!

Mr. Chaffanbrass smiled at his victim, and for a moment was quite soft with him,—as a cat is soft with a mouse. The reporters could hardly hear his first question,—"I believe you are an under-secretary of state?" Lord Fawn acknowledged the fact. Now it was the case that in the palmy days of our hero's former career he had filled the very office which Lord Fawn now occupied, and that Lord Fawn had at the time filled a similar position in another department. These facts Mr. Chaffanbrass extracted from his witness,—not without an appearance of unwillingness, which was produced, however, altogether by the natural antagonism of the victim to his persecutor; for Mr. Chaffanbrass, even when asking the simplest questions, in the simplest words, even when abstaining from that sarcasm of tone under which witnesses were wont to feel that they were being flayed alive, could so look at a man as to create an antagonism which no witness could conceal. In asking a man his name, and age, and calling, he could produce an impression that the man was unwilling to tell anything, and that, therefore, the jury were entitled to regard his evidence with suspicion. "Then," continued Mr. Chaffanbrass, "you must have met him frequently in the intercourse of your business?"

"I suppose I did,—sometimes."

"Sometimes? You belonged to the same party?"

"We did n't sit in the same House."

"I know that, my lord. I know very well what House you sat in. But I suppose you would condescend to be acquainted with even a commoner who held

the very office which you hold now. You belonged to the same club with him."

"I don't go much to the clubs," said Lord Fawn.

"But the quarrel of which we have heard so much took place at a club in your presence?" Lord Fawn assented. "In fact you cannot but have been intimately and accurately acquainted with the personal appearance of the gentleman who is now on his trial. Is that so?"

"I never was intimate with him."

Mr. Chaffanbrass looked up at the jury and shook his head sadly. "I am not presuming, Lord Fawn, that you so far derogated as to be intimate with this gentleman,—as to whom, however, I shall be able to show by-and-by that he was the chosen friend of the very man under whose mastership you now serve. I ask whether his appearance is not familiar to you?"

Lord Fawn at last said that it was. "Do you know his height? What should you say was his height?" Lord Fawn altogether refused to give an opinion on such a subject, but acknowledged that he should not be surprised if he were told that Mr. Finn was over six feet high. "In fact you consider him a tall man, my lord? There he is, you can look at him. Is he a tall man?" Lord Fawn did look, but would n't give an answer.

"I 'll undertake to say, my lord, there is n't a person in the court at this moment, except yourself, who would n't be ready to express an opinion on his oath that Mr. Finn is a tall man. Mr. Chief-Constable, just let the prisoner step out from the dock for a moment. He won't run away. I must have his lordship's opinion as to Mr. Finn's height." Poor Phineas,

when this was said, clutched hold of the front of the dock, as though determined that nothing but main force should make him exhibit himself to the court in the manner proposed.

But the need for exhibition passed away. "I know that he is a very tall man," said Lord Fawn.

"You know that he is a very tall man. We all know it. There can be no doubt about it. He is, as you say, a very tall man,—with whose personal appearance you have long been familiar? I ask again, my lord, whether you have not been long familiar with his personal appearance?" After some further agonising delay Lord Fawn at last acknowledged that it had been so. "Now we shall get on like a house on fire," said Mr. Chaffanbrass.

But still the house did not burn very quickly. A string of questions was then asked as to the attitude of the man who had been seen coming out of the mews wearing a grey greatcoat,—as to his attitude, and as to his general likeness to Phineas Finn. In answer to these Lord Fawn would only say that he had not observed the man's attitude, and had certainly not thought of the prisoner when he saw the man. "My lord," said Mr. Chaffanbrass, very solemnly, "look at your late friend and colleague, and remember that his life depends probably on the accuracy of your memory. The man you saw—murdered Mr. Bonteen. With all my experience in such matters,—which is great, and with all my skill,—which is something, I cannot stand against that fact. It is for me to show that that man and my client were not one and the same person, and I must do so by means of your evidence,—by sifting what you say to-day and by comparing it with what

you have already said on other occasions. I understand you now to say that there is nothing in your remembrance of the man you saw, independently of the colour of the coat, to guide you to an opinion whether that man was or was not one and the same with the prisoner?"

In all the crowd then assembled there was no man more thoroughly under the influence of conscience as to his conduct than was Lord Fawn in reference to the evidence which he was called upon to give. Not only would the idea of endangering the life of a human being have been horrible to him, but the sanctity of an oath was imperative to him. He was essentially a truth-speaking man, if only he knew how to speak the truth. He would have sacrificed much to establish the innocence of Phineas Finn,—not for the love of Phineas, but for the love of innocence;—but not even to do that would he have lied. But he was a bad witness, and by his slowness, and by a certain unsustained pomposity which was natural to him, had already taught the jury to think that he was anxious to convict the prisoner. Two men in the court, and two only, thoroughly understood his condition. Mr. Chaffanbrass saw it all, and intended without the slightest scruple to take advantage of it. And the chief-justice saw it all, and was already resolving how he could set the witness right with the jury.

"I did n't think of Mr. Finn at the time," said Lord Fawn in answer to the last question.

"So I understand. The man did n't strike you as being tall."

"I don't think that he did."

"But yet in the evidence you gave before the mag-

istrate in Bow Street I think you expressed a very strong opinion that the man you saw running out of the mews was Mr. Finn?" Lord Fawn was again silent. "I am asking your lordship a question to which I must request an answer. Here is the Times' report of the examination, with which you can refresh your memory, and you are of course aware that it was mainly on your evidence as here reported that my client now stands there in jeopardy of his life."

"I am not aware of anything of the kind," said the witness.

"Very well. We will drop that then. But such was your evidence, whether important or not important. Of course your lordship can take what time you please for recollection."

Lord Fawn tried very hard to recollect, but would not look at the newspaper which had been handed to him. "I cannot remember what words I used. It seems to me that I thought it must have been Mr. Finn because I had been told that Mr. Finn could have been there by running round."

"Surely, my lord, that would not have sufficed to induce you to give such evidence as is there reported?"

"And the colour of the coat," said Lord Fawn.

"In fact you went by the colour of the coat, and that only?"

"Then there had been the quarrel."

"My lord, is not that begging the question? Mr. Bonteen quarrelled with Mr. Finn. Mr. Bonteen was murdered by a man,—as we all believe,—whom you saw at a certain spot. Therefore you identified the man whom you saw as Mr. Finn. Was that so?"

"I did n't identify him."

"At any rate you do not do so now? Putting aside the grey coat, there is nothing to make you now think that that man and Mr. Finn were one and the same? Come, my lord, on behalf of that man's life, which is in great jeopardy,—is in great jeopardy because of the evidence given by you before the magistrate,—do not be ashamed to speak the truth openly, though it be at variance with what you may have said before with ill-advised haste."

"My lord, is it proper that I should be treated in this way?" said the witness, appealing to the Bench.

"Mr. Chaffanbrass," said the judge, again looking at the barrister over his spectacles, "I think you are stretching the privilege of your position too far."

"I shall have to stretch it further yet, my lord. His lordship in his evidence before the magistrate gave on his oath a decided opinion that the man he saw was Mr. Finn;—and on that evidence Mr. Finn was committed for murder. Let him say openly, now, to the jury,—when Mr. Finn is on his trial for his life before the court, and for all his hopes in life before the country,—whether he thinks as then he thought, and on what grounds he thinks so."

"I think so because of the quarrel, and because of the grey coat."

"For no other reasons?"

"No;—for no other reasons."

"Your only ground for suggesting identity is the grey coat?"

"And the quarrel," said Lord Fawn.

"My lord, in giving evidence as to identity, I fear that you do not understand the meaning of the word." Lord Fawn looked up at the judge, but the judge on

this occasion said nothing. "At any rate we have it from you at present that there was nothing in the appearance of the man you saw like to that of Mr. Finn except the colour of the coat."

"I don't think there was," said Lord Fawn, slowly.

Then there occurred a scene in the court which no doubt was gratifying to the spectators and may in part have repaid them for the weariness of the whole proceeding. Mr. Chaffanbrass, while Lord Fawn was still in the witness box, requested permission for a certain man to stand forward, and put on the coat which was lying on the table before him,—this coat being in truth the identical garment which Mr. Meager had brought home with him on the morning of the murder. This man was Mr. Wickerby's clerk, Mr. Scruby, and he put on the coat,—which seemed to fit him well. Mr. Chaffanbrass then asked permission to examine Mr. Scruby, explaining that much time might be saved, and declaring that he had but one question to ask him. After some difficulty this permission was given him, and Mr. Scruby was asked his height. Mr. Scruby was five feet eight inches, and had been accurately measured on the previous day with reference to the question. Then the examination of Lord Fawn was resumed, and Mr. Chaffanbrass referred to that very irregular interview to which he had so improperly enticed the witness in Mr. Wickerby's chambers. For a long time Sir Gregory Grogram declared that he would not permit any allusion to what had taken place at a most improper conference,—a conference which he could not stigmatise in sufficiently strong language. But Mr. Chaffanbrass, smiling blandly,—smiling very blandly for him,—suggested that the impropriety of the con-

ference, let it have been ever so abominable, did not prevent the fact of the conference, and that he was manifestly within his right in alluding to it. "Suppose, my lord, that Lord Fawn had confessed in Mr. Wickerby's chambers that he had murdered Mr. Finn himself, and had since repented of that confession, would Mr. Camperdown and Mr. Wickerby, who were present, and would I, be now debarred from stating that confession in evidence, because, in deference to some fanciful rules of etiquette, Lord Fawn should not have been there?" Mr. Chaffanbrass at last prevailed, and the evidence was resumed.

"You saw Mr. Scruby wear that coat in Mr. Wickerby's chambers." Lord Fawn said that he could not identify the coat. "We 'll take care to have it identified. We shall get a great deal out of that coat yet. You saw that man wear a coat like that?"

"Yes; I did."

"And you see him now."

"Yes, I do."

"Does he remind you of the figure of the man you saw come out of the mews?" Lord Fawn paused. "We can't make him move about here as we did in Mr. Wickerby's room; but remembering that as you must do, does he look like the man?"

"I don't remember what the man looked like."

"Did you not tell us in Mr. Wickerby's room that Mr. Scruby, with the grey coat on, was like the figure of the man?"

Questions of this nature were prolonged for near half an hour, during which Sir Gregory made more than one attempt to defend his witness from the weapons of their joint enemies; but Lord Fawn at last admitted

that he had acknowledged the resemblance, and did, in some faint ambiguous fashion, acknowledge it in his present evidence.

"My lord," said Mr. Chaffanbrass, as he allowed Lord Fawn to go down, "you have no doubt taken a note of Mr. Scruby's height." Whereupon the judge nodded his head.

CHAPTER X.

MR. CHAFFANBRASS FOR THE DEFENCE.

THE case for the prosecution was completed on the Saturday evening, Mrs. Bunce having been examined as the last witness on that side. She was only called upon to say that her lodger had been in the habit of letting himself in and out of her house at all hours with a latch key;—but she insisted on saying more, and told the judge and the jury and the barristers that if they thought that Mr. Finn had murdered anybody they did n't know anything about the world in general. Whereupon Mr. Chaffanbrass said that he would like to ask her a question or two, and with consummate flattery extracted from her her opinion of her lodger. She had known him for years, and thought that, of all the gentlemen that ever were born, he was the least likely to do such a bloody-minded action. Mr. Chaffanbrass was, perhaps, right in thinking that her evidence might be as serviceable as that of the lords and countesses.

During the Sunday the trial was, as a matter of course, the talk of the town. Poor Lord Fawn shut himself up, and was seen by no one;—but his conduct and evidence were discussed everywhere. At the clubs it was thought that he had escaped as well as could be expected; but he himself felt that he had been disgraced forever. There was a very common opinion that Mr. Chaffanbrass had admitted too much when he

had declared that the man whom Lord Fawn had seen was doubtless the murderer. To the minds of men generally it seemed to be less evident that the man so seen should have done the deed, than that Phineas Finn should have been that man. Was it probable that there should be two men going about in grey coats, in exactly the same vicinity, and at exactly the same hour of the night? And then the evidence which Lord Fawn had given before the magistrates was to the world at large at any rate as convincing as that given in the court. The jury would, of course, be instructed to regard only the latter; whereas the general public would naturally be guided by the two combined. At the club it was certainly believed that the case was going against the prisoner.

"You have read it all, of course," said the Duchess of Omnium to her husband, as she sat with the Observer in her hand on that Sunday morning. The Sunday papers were full of the report, and were enjoying a very extended circulation.

"I wish you would not think so much about it," said the Duke.

"That 's very easily said, but how is one to help thinking about it? Of course I am thinking about it. You know all about the coat. It belonged to the man where Mealyus was lodging."

"I will not talk about the coat, Glencora. If Mr. Finn did commit the murder it is right that he should be convicted."

"But if he did n't?"

"It would be doubly right that he should be acquitted. But the jury will have means of arriving at a conclusion without prejudice, which you and I can-

not have; and therefore we should be prepared to take their verdict as correct."

"If they find him guilty, their verdict will be damnable and false," said the Duchess. Whereupon the Duke turned away in anger, and resolved that he would say nothing more about the trial,—which resolution, however, he was compelled to break before the trial was over.

"What do you think about it, Mr. Erle?" asked the other Duke.

"I don't know what to think;—I only hope."

"That he may be acquitted?"

"Of course."

"Whether guilty or innocent?"

"Well;—yes. But if he is acquitted, I shall believe him to have been innocent. Your Grace thinks?——"

"I am as unwilling to think as you are, Mr. Erle." It was thus that people spoke of it. With the exception of some very few, all those who had known Phineas were anxious for an acquittal, though they could not bring themselves to believe that an innocent man had been put in peril of his life.

On the Monday morning the trial was recommenced, and the whole day was taken up by the address which Mr. Chaffanbrass made to the jury. He began by telling them the history of the coat which lay before them, promising to prove by evidence all the details which he stated. It was not his intention, he said, to accuse any one of the murder. It was his business to defend the prisoner, not to accuse others. But, as he should prove to them, two persons had been arrested as soon as the murder had been discovered,—two persons totally unknown to each other, and who were

never for a moment supposed to have acted together, —and the suspicion of the police had in the first instance pointed, not to his client, but to the other man. That other man had also quarrelled with Mr. Bonteen, and that other man was now in custody on a charge of bigamy chiefly through the instrumentality of Mr. Bonteen, who had been the friend of the victim of the supposed bigamist. With the accusation of bigamy they would have nothing to do, but he must ask them to take cognisance of that quarrel as well as of the quarrel at the club. He then named that formerly popular preacher, the Rev. Mr. Emilius, and explained that he would prove that this man, who had incurred the suspicion of the police in the first instance, had during the night of the murder been so circumstanced as to have been able to use the coat produced. He would prove also that Mr. Emilius was of precisely the same height as the man whom they had seen wearing the coat. God forbid that he should bring an accusation of murder against a man on such slight testimony. But if the evidence, as grounded on the coat, was slight against Emilius, how could it prevail at all against his client? The two coats were as different as chalk from cheese, the one being what would be called a gentleman's fashionable walking coat, and the other the wraprascal of such a fellow as was Mr. Meager. And yet Lord Fawn, who attempted to identify the prisoner only by his coat, could give them no opinion as to which was the coat he had seen! But Lord Fawn, who found himself to be debarred by his conscience from repeating the opinion he had given before the magistrate as to the identity of Phineas Finn with the man he had seen, did tell them that the figure of that

man was similar to the figure of him who had worn the coat on Saturday in presence of them all. This man in the street had therefore been like Mr. Emilius, and could not in the least have resembled the prisoner. Mr. Chaffanbrass would not tell the jury that this point bore strongly against Mr. Emilius, but he took upon himself to assert that it was quite sufficient to snap asunder the thin thread of circumstantial evidence by which his client was connected with the murder. A great deal more was said about Lord Fawn, which was not complimentary to that nobleman. "His lordship is an honest, slow man, who has doubtless meant to tell you the truth, but who does not understand the meaning of what he himself says. When he swore before the magistrate that he thought he could identify my client with the man in the street, he really meant that he thought that there must be identity, because he believed from other reasons that Mr. Finn was the man in the street. Mr. Bonteen had been murdered; —according to Lord Fawn's thinking had probably been murdered by Mr. Finn. And it was also probable to him that Mr. Bonteen had been murdered by the man in the street. He came thus to the conclusion that the prisoner was the man in the street. In fact, as far as the process of identifying is concerned, his lordship's evidence is altogether in favour of the prisoner. The figure seen by him we must suppose was the figure of a short man, and not of one tall and commanding in his presence, as is that of the prisoner."

There were many other points on which Mr. Chaffanbrass insisted at great length;—but chiefly, perhaps, on the improbability, he might say impossibility, that the plot for a murder so contrived should have entered

into a man's head, have been completed and executed, all within a few minutes. "But under no hypothesis compatible with the allegations of the prosecution can it be conceived that the murder should have been contemplated by my client before the quarrel at the club. No, gentlemen;—the murderer had been at his work for days. He had examined the spot and measured the distances. He had dogged the steps of his victim on previous nights. In the shade of some dark doorway he had watched him from his club, and had hurried by his secret path to the spot which he had appointed for the deed. Can any man doubt that the murder has thus been committed, let who will have been the murderer? But, if so, then my client could not have done the deed." Much had been made of the words spoken at the club door. Was it probable,—was it possible,—that a man intending to commit a murder should declare how easily he could do it, and display the weapon he intended to use? The evidence given as to that part of the night's work was, he contended, altogether in the prisoner's favour. Then he spoke of the life-preserver, and gave a rather long account of the manner in which Phineas Finn had once taken two garrotters prisoner in the street. All this lasted till the great men on the bench trooped out to lunch. And then Mr. Chaffanbrass, who had been speaking for nearly four hours, retired to a small room and there drank a pint of port-wine. While he was doing so, Mr. Serjeant Birdbott spoke a word to him, but he only shook his head and snarled. He was telling himself at the moment how quick may be the resolves of the eager mind,—for he was convinced that the idea of attacking Mr. Bonteen had occurred to Phineas Finn

after he had displayed the life-preserver at the club door; and he was telling himself also how impossible it is for a dull conscientious man to give accurate evidence as to what he had himself seen,—for he was convinced that Lord Fawn had seen Phineas Finn in the street. But to no human being had he expressed this opinion; nor would he express it,—unless his client should be hung.

After lunch he occupied nearly three hours in giving to the jury, and of course to the whole assembled court, the details of about two dozen cases, in which apparently strong circumstantial evidence had been wrong in its tendency. In some of the cases quoted, the persons tried had been acquitted; in some, convicted and afterwards pardoned; in one pardoned after many years of punishment;—and in one the poor victim had been hung. On this he insisted with a pathetic eloquence which certainly would not have been expected from his appearance, and spoke with tears in his eyes,—real unaffected tears,—of the misery of those wretched jurymen who, in the performance of their duty, had been led into so frightful an error. Through the whole of this long recital he seemed to feel no fatigue, and when he had done with his list of judicial mistakes about five o'clock in the afternoon, went on to make what he called the very few remarks necessary as to the evidence which on the next day he proposed to produce as to the prisoner's character. He ventured to think that evidence as to the character of such a nature,—so strong, so convincing, so complete, and so free from all objection, had never yet been given in a criminal court. At six o'clock he completed his speech, and it was computed that the old man had been on his legs

very nearly seven hours. It was said of him afterwards that he was taken home speechless by one of his daughters and immediately put to bed, that he roused himself about eight and ate his dinner and drank a bottle of port in his bedroom, that he then slept,—refusing to stir even when he was waked, till half-past nine in the morning, and that then he scrambled into his clothes, breakfasted, and got down to the court in half an hour. At ten o'clock he was in his place, and nobody knew that he was any the worse for the previous day's exertion.

This was on a Tuesday, the fifth day of the trial, and, upon the whole, perhaps the most interesting. A long array of distinguished persons,—of women as well as men,—was brought up to give to the jury their opinion as to the character of Mr. Finn. Mr. Low was the first, who, having been his tutor when he was studying at the Bar, knew him longer than any other Londoner. Then came his countryman Laurence Fitzgibbon, and Barrington Erle, and others of his own party who had been intimate with him. And men, too, from the opposite side of the House were brought up, Sir Orlando Drought among the number, all of whom said that they had known the prisoner well, and from their knowledge would have considered it impossible that he should have become a murderer. The two last called were Lord Cantrip and Mr. Monk, one of whom was, and the other had been, a Cabinet Minister. But before them came Lady Cantrip,—and Lady Chiltern, whom we once knew as Violet Effingham, whom this very prisoner had in early days fondly hoped to make his wife, who was still young and beautiful, and who had never before entered a public court.

There had, of course, been much question as to the witnesses to be selected. The Duchess of Omnium had been anxious to be one, but the Duke had forbidden it, telling his wife that she really did not know the man, and that she was carried away by a foolish enthusiasm. Lady Cantrip when asked had at once consented. She had known Phineas Finn when he had served under her husband, and had liked him much. Then what other woman's tongue should be brought to speak of the man's softness and tender bearing! It was out of the question that Lady Laura Kennedy should appear. She did not even propose it when her brother with unnecessary sternness told her it could not be so. Then his wife looked at him. "You shall go," said Lord Chiltern, "if you feel equal to it. It seems to be nonsense, but they say that it is important."

"I will go," said Violet, with her eyes full of tears. Afterwards when her sister-in-law besought her to be generous in her testimony, she only smiled as she assented. Could generosity go beyond hers?

Lord Chiltern preceded his wife. "I have," he said, "known Mr. Finn well, and have loved him dearly. I have eaten with him, and drank with him, have ridden with him, have lived with him, and have quarrelled with him; and I know him as I do my own right hand." Then he stretched forth his arm with the palm extended.

"Irrespectively of the evidence in this case you would not have thought him to be a man likely to commit such a crime?" asked Serjeant Birdbott.

"I am quite sure from my knowledge of the man that he could not commit a murder," said Lord Chiltern; "and I don't care what the evidence is."

Then came his wife, and it certainly was a pretty

sight to see as her husband led her up to the box and stood close beside her as she gave her evidence. There were many there who knew much of the history of her life,—who knew that passage in it of her early love,—for the tale had of course been told when it was whispered about that Lady Chiltern was to be examined as a witness. Every ear was at first strained to hear her words;—but they were audible in every corner of the court without any effort. It need hardly be said that she was treated with the greatest deference on every side. She answered the questions very quietly, but apparently without nervousness. "Yes; she had known Mr. Finn long and intimately, and had very greatly valued his friendship. She did so still,—as much as ever. Yes; she had known him for some years, and in circumstances which she thought justified her in saying that she understood his character. She regarded him as a man who was brave and tender-hearted, soft in feeling, and manly in disposition. To her it was quite incredible that he should have committed a crime such as this. She knew him to be a man prone to forgive offences, and of a sweet nature." And it was pretty too to watch the unwonted gentleness of old Chaffanbrass as he asked the questions, and carefully abstained from putting any one that could pain her. Sir Gregory said that he had heard her evidence with great pleasure, but that he had no question to ask her himself. Then she stepped down, again took her husband's arm, and left the court amidst a hum of almost affectionate greeting.

And what must he have thought as he stood there within the dock, looking at her and listening to her? There had been months in his life when he had almost

trusted that he would succeed in winning that fair, highly born, and wealthy woman for his wife; and though he had failed, and now knew that he had never really touched her heart, that she had always loved the man whom,—though she had rejected him time after time because of the dangers of his ways,—she had at last married, yet it must have been pleasant to him, even in his peril, to hear from her own lips how well she had esteemed him. She left the court with her veil down, and he could not catch her eye; but Lord Chiltern nodded to him in his old pleasant familiar way, as though to bid him take courage, and to tell him that all things would even yet be well with him.

The evidence given by Lady Cantrip and her husband and by Mr. Monk was equally favourable. She had always regarded him as a perfect gentleman. Lord Cantrip had found him to be devoted to the services of the country,—modest, intelligent, and high-spirited. Perhaps the few words which fell from Mr. Monk were as strong as any that were spoken. "He is a man whom I have delighted to call my friend, and I have been happy to think that his services have been at the disposal of his country."

Sir Gregory Grogram replied. It seemed to him that the evidence was as he had left it. It would be for the jury to decide, under such directions as his lordship might be pleased to give them, how far that evidence brought the guilt home to the prisoner. He would use no rhetoric in pushing the case against the prisoner; but he must submit to them that his learned friend had not shown that acquaintance with human nature, which the gentleman undoubtedly possessed, in arguing that there had lacked time for the conception

and execution of the crime. Then, at considerable length, he strove to show that Mr. Chaffanbrass had been unjustly severe upon Lord Fawn.

It was late in the afternoon when Sir Gregory had finished his speech, and the judge's charge was reserved for a sixth day.

CHAPTER XI.

CONFUSION IN THE COURT.

On the following morning it was observed that before the judges took their seats Mr. Chaffanbrass entered the court with a manner much more brisk than was expected from him now that his own work was done. As a matter of course he would be there to hear the charge, but, almost equally as a matter of course, he would be languid, silent, cross, and unenergetic. They who knew him were sure, when they saw his bearing on this morning, that he intended to do something more before the charge was given. The judges entered the court nearly half an hour later than usual, and it was observed with surprise that they were followed by the Duke of Omnium. Mr. Chaffanbrass was on his feet before the chief-justice had taken his seat, but the judge was the first to speak. It was observed that he held a scrap of paper in his hand, and that the barrister held a similar scrap. Then every man in the court knew that some message had come suddenly by the wires. "I am informed, Mr. Chaffanbrass, that you wish to address the court before I begin my charge."

"Yes, my lud; and I am afraid, my lud, that I shall have to ask your ludship to delay your charge for some days, and to subject the jury to the very great inconvenience of prolonged incarceration for another week; —either to do that or to call upon the jury to acquit

the prisoner. I venture to assert, on my own peril, that no jury can convict the prisoner after hearing me read that which I hold in my hand." Then Mr. Chaffanbrass paused, as though expecting that the judge would speak;—but the judge said not a word, but sat looking at the old barrister over his spectacles.

Every eye was turned upon Phineas Finn, who up to this moment had heard nothing of these new tidings, —who did not in the least know on what was grounded the singularly confident,—almost insolently confident assertion which Mr. Chaffanbrass had made in his favour. On him the effect was altogether distressing. He had borne the trying week with singular fortitude, having stood there in the place of shame hour after hour, and day after day, expecting his doom. It had been to him as a lifetime of torture. He had become almost numb from the weariness of his position and the agonising strain upon his mind. The gaoler had offered him a seat from day to day, but he had always refused it, preferring to lean upon the rail and gaze upon the court. He had almost ceased to hope for anything except the end of it. He had lost count of the days, and had begun to feel that the trial was an eternity of torture in itself. At nights he could not sleep, but during the Sunday, after mass, he had slept all day. Then it had begun again, and when the Tuesday came he hardly knew how long it had been since that vacant Sunday. And now he heard the advocate declare, without knowing on what ground the declaration was grounded, that the trial must be postponed, or that the jury must be instructed to acquit him.

"This telegram has reached us only this morning," continued Mr. Chaffanbrass. "'Mealyus had a house

door-key made in Prague. We have the mould in our possession, and will bring the man who made the key to England.' Now, my lud, the case in the hands of the police, as against this man Mealyus, or Emilius, as he has chosen to call himself, broke down altogether on the presumption that he could not have let himself in and out of the house in which he had put himself to bed on the night of the murder. We now propose to prove that he had prepared himself with the means of doing so, and had done so after a fashion which is conclusive as to his having required the key for some guilty purpose. We assert that your ludship cannot allow the case to go to the jury without taking cognisance of this telegram; and we go further, and say that those twelve men, as twelve human beings with hearts in their bosoms and ordinary intelligence at their command, cannot ignore the message, even should your ludship insist upon their doing so with all the energy at your disposal."

Then there was a scene in court, and it appeared that no less than four messages had been received from Prague, all to the same effect. One had been addressed by Madame Goesler to her friend the Duchess, —and that message had caused the Duke's appearance on the scene. He had brought his telegram direct to the Old Bailey, and the chief-justice now held it in his hand. The lawyer's clerk who had accompanied Madame Goesler had telegraphed to the governor of the gaol, to Mr. Wickerby, and to the attorney-general. Sir Gregory, rising with the telegram in his hand, stated that he had received the same information. "I do not see," said he, "that it at all alters the evidence as against the prisoner."

"Let your evidence go to the jury, then," said Mr. Chaffanbrass, "with such observations as his lordship may choose to make on the telegram. I shall be contented. You have already got your other man in prison on a charge of bigamy."

"I could not take notice of the message in charging the jury, Mr. Chaffanbrass," said the judge. "It has come, as far as we know, from the energy of a warm friend,—from that hearty friendship with which it seemed yesterday that this gentleman, the prisoner at the bar, has inspired so many men and women of high character. But it proves nothing. It is an assertion. And where should we all be, Mr. Chaffanbrass, if it should appear hereafter that the assertion is fictitious, —prepared purposely to aid the escape of a criminal?"

"I defy you to ignore it, my lord."

"I can only suggest, Mr. Chaffanbrass," continued the judge, "that you should obtain the consent of the gentlemen on the other side to a postponement of my charge."

Then spoke out the foreman of the jury. Was it proposed that they should be locked up till somebody should come from Prague, and that then the trial should be recommenced? The system, said the foreman, under which Middlesex juries were chosen for service in the City was known to be most horribly cruel;—but cruelty to jurymen such as this had never even been heard of. Then a most irregular word was spoken. One of the jurymen declared that he was quite willing to believe the telegram. "Every one believes it," said Mr. Chaffanbrass. Then the chief-justice scolded the juryman, and Sir Gregory Grogram scolded Mr. Chaffanbrass. It seemed as though all the rules of the court were

to be set at defiance. "Will my learned friend say that he does n't believe it?" asked Mr. Chaffanbrass. "I neither believe nor disbelieve it; but it cannot affect the evidence," said Sir Gregory. "Then send the case to the jury," said Mr. Chaffanbrass. It seemed that everybody was talking, and Mr. Wickerby, the attorney, tried to explain it all to the prisoner over the bar of the dock, not in the lowest possible voice. The chief-justice became angry, and the guardian of the silence of the court bestirred himself energetically. "My lud," said Mr. Chaffanbrass, "I maintain that it is proper that the prisoner should be informed of the purport of these telegrams. Mercy demands it, and justice as well." Phineas Finn, however, did not understand, as he had known nothing about the latch key of the house in Northumberland Street.

Something, however, must be done. The chief-justice was of opinion that, although the preparation of a latch key in Prague could not really affect the evidence against the prisoner,—although the facts against the prisoner would not be altered, let the manufacture of that special key be ever so clearly proved,—nevertheless the jury were entitled to have before them the facts now tendered in evidence before they could be called upon to give a verdict, and that therefore they should submit themselves, in the service of their country, to the very serious additional inconvenience which they would be called upon to endure. Sundry of the jury altogether disagreed with this, and became loud in their anger. They had already been locked up for a week. "And we are quite prepared to give a verdict," said one. The judge again scolded him very severely; and as the attorney-general did at last assent, and as the

unfortunate jurymen had no power in the matter, so it was at last arranged. The trial should be postponed till time should be given for Madame Goesler and the blacksmith to reach London from Prague.

If the matter was interesting to the public before, it became doubly interesting now. It was, of course, known to everybody that Madame Goesler had undertaken a journey to Bohemia,—and, as many supposed, a roving tour through all the wilder parts of unknown Europe, Poland, Hungary, and the Principalities for instance,—with the object of looking for evidence to save the life of Phineas Finn; and grandly romantic tales were told of her wit, her wealth, and her beauty. The story was published of the Duke of Omnium's will, only not exactly the true story. The late Duke had left her everything at his disposal, and it was hinted that they had been privately married just before the Duke's death. Of course Madame Goesler became very popular, and the blacksmith from Prague who had made the key was expected with an enthusiasm which almost led to preparation for a public reception.

And yet, let the blacksmith from Prague be ever so minute in his evidence as to the key, let it be made as clear as running water that Mealyus had caused to be constructed for him in Prague a key that would open the door of the house in Northumberland Street, the facts as proved at the trial would not be at all changed. The lawyers were much at variance with their opinions on the matter, some thinking that the judge had been altogether wrong in delaying his charge. According to them he should not have allowed Mr. Chaffanbrass to have read the telegram in court. The charge should have been given, and the sentence of the court should

have been pronounced if a verdict of guilty were given. The Home Secretary should then have granted a respite till the coming of the blacksmith, and have extended this respite to a pardon, if advised that the circumstances of the latch key rendered doubtful the propriety of the verdict. Others, however, maintained that in this way a grievous penalty would be inflicted on a man who, by general consent, was now held to be innocent. Not only would he, by such an arrangement of circumstances, have been left for some prolonged period under the agony of a condemnation, but by the necessity of the case, he would lose his seat for Tankerville. It would be imperative upon the House to declare vacant by its own action a seat held by a man condemned to death for murder, and no pardon from the Queen or from the Home Secretary would absolve the House from that duty. The House, as a House of Parliament, could only recognise the verdict of the jury as to the man's guilt. The Queen, of course, might pardon whom she pleased, but no pardon from the Queen would remove the guilt implied by the sentence. Many went much further than this, and were prepared to prove that were he once condemned, he could not afterwards sit in the House, even if re-elected.

Now there was unquestionably an intense desire,—since the arrival of these telegrams,—that Phineas Finn should retain his seat. It may be a question whether he would not have been the most popular man in the House could he have sat there on the day after the telegrams arrived. The attorney-general had declared,—and many others had declared with him,—that this information about the latch key did not in the least affect the evidence as given against Mr. Finn. Could

it have been possible to convict the other man, merely because he had surreptitiously caused a door-key of the house in which he lived to be made for him? And how would this new information have been received had Lord Fawn sworn unreservedly that the man he had seen running out of the mews had been Phineas Finn? It was acknowledged that the latch key could not be accepted as sufficient evidence against Mealyus. But nevertheless the information conveyed by the telegrams altogether changed the opinion of the public as to the guilt or innocence of Phineas Finn. His life now might have been insured, as against the gallows, at a very low rate. It was felt that no jury could convict him, and he was much more pitied in being subjected to a prolonged incarceration than even those twelve unfortunate men who had felt sure that the Wednesday would have been the last day of the unmerited martyrdom.

Phineas in his prison was materially circumstanced precisely as he had been before the trial. He was supplied with a profusion of luxuries, could they have comforted him; and was allowed to receive visitors. But he would see no one but his sisters,—except that he had one interview with Mr. Low. Even Mr. Low found it difficult to make him comprehend the exact condition of the affair, and could not induce him to be comforted when he did understand it. What had he to do,—how could his innocence or his guilt be concerned,—with the manufacture of a paltry key by such a one as Mealyus? How would it have been with him and with his name forever if this fact had not been discovered? "I was to be hung or saved from hanging according to the chances of such a thing as this!

I do not care for my life in a country where such injustice can be done." His friend endeavoured to assure him that even had nothing been heard of the key the jury would have acquitted him. But Phineas would not believe him. It had seemed to him as he had listened to the whole proceeding that the court had been against him. The attorney- and solicitor-general had appeared to him resolved upon hanging him,—men who had been, at any rate, his intimate acquaintances, with whom he had sat on the same bench, who ought to have known him. And the judge had taken the part of Lord Fawn, who had seemed to Phineas to be bent on swearing away his life. He had borne himself very gallantly during that week, having in all his intercourse with his attorney, spoken without a quaver in his voice, and without a flaw in the perspicuity of his intelligence. But now, when Mr. Low came to him, explaining to him that it was impossible that a verdict should be found against him, he was quite broken down. "There is nothing left of me," he said at the end of the interview. "I feel that I had better take to my bed and die. Even when I think of all that friends have done for me, it fails to cheer me. In this matter I should not have had to depend on friends. Had not she gone for me to that place every one would have believed me to be a murderer."

And yet, in his solitude, he thought very much of the marvellous love shown to him by his friends. Words had been spoken which had been very sweet to him in all his misery,—words such as neither men nor women can say to each other in the ordinary intercourse of life, much as they may wish that their purport should be understood. Lord Chiltern, Lord Cantrip, and Mr.

Monk had alluded to him as a man specially singled out by them for their friendship. Lady Cantrip, than whom no woman in London was more discreet, had been equally enthusiastic. Then how gracious, how tender, how inexpressibly sweet had been the words of her who had been Violet Effingham? And now the news had reached him of Madame Goesler's journey to the Continent. "It was a wonderful thing for her to do," Mr. Low had said. Yes, indeed! Remembering all that had passed between them he acknowledged to himself that it was very wonderful. Were it not that his back were now broken, that he was prostrate and must remain so, a man utterly crushed by what he had endured, it might have been possible that she should do more for him even than she yet had done.

CHAPTER XII.

"I HATE HER!"

Lady Laura Kennedy had been allowed to take no active part in the manifestations of friendship which at this time were made on behalf of Phineas Finn. She had, indeed, gone to him in his prison, and made daily efforts to administer to his comfort; but she could not go up in the court and speak for him. And now this other woman, whom she hated, would have the glory of his deliverance! She already began to see a fate before her which would make even her past misery as nothing to that which was to come. She was a widow,—not yet two months a widow; and though she did not and could not mourn the death of a husband as do other widows,—though she could not sorrow in her heart for a man whom she had never loved, and from whom she had been separated during half her married life,—yet the fact of her widowhood and the circumstances of her weeds were heavy on her. That she loved this man, Phineas Finn, with a passionate devotion of which the other woman could know nothing she was quite sure. Love him! Had she not been true to him and to his interests from the very first day in which he had come among them in London, with almost more than a woman's truth? She knew and recalled to her memory over and over again her own one great sin,—the fault of her life. When she was, as regarded her own means, a poor woman, she had refused

to be this poor man's wife, and had given her hand to a rich suitor. But she had done this with a conviction that she could so best serve the interests of the man in regard to whom she had promised herself that her feeling should henceforth be one of simple and purest friendship. She had made a great effort to carry out that intention, but the effort had been futile. She had striven to do her duty to a husband whom she disliked, —but even in that she had failed. At one time she had been persistent in her intercourse with Phineas Finn, and at another had resolved that she would not see him. She had been madly angry with him when he came to her with the story of his love for another woman, and had madly shown her anger; but yet she had striven to get for him the wife he wanted, though in doing so she would have abandoned one of the dearest purposes of her life. She had moved heaven and earth for him,—her heaven and earth,—when there was danger that he would lose his seat in Parliament. She had encountered the jealousy of her husband with scorn,—and had then deserted him because he was jealous. And all this she did with a consciousness of her own virtue which was almost as sublime as it was ill-founded. She had been wrong. She confessed so much to herself with bitter tears. She had marred the happiness of three persons by the mistake she had made in early life. But it had not yet occurred to her that she had sinned. To her thinking, the jealousy of her husband had been preposterous and abominable, because she had known,—and had therefore felt that he should have known,—that she would never disgrace him by that which the world calls falsehood in a wife. She had married him without loving him, but it seemed

to her that he was in fault for that. They had become wretched, but she had never pitied his wretchedness. She had left him, and thought herself to be ill-used because he had ventured to reclaim his wife. Through it all she had been true in her regard to the one man she had ever loved, and,—though she admitted her own folly and knew her own shipwreck,—yet she had always drawn some woman's consolation from the conviction of her own constancy. He had vanished from her sight for a while with a young wife,—never from her mind,—and then he had returned a widower.

Through silence, absence, and distance she had been true to him. On his return to his old ways she had at once welcomed him, and strove to aid him. Everything that was hers should be his,—if only he would open his hands to take it. And she would tell it him all,—let him know every corner of her heart. She was a married woman, and could not be his wife. She was a woman of virtue, and would not be his mistress. But she would be to him a friend so tender that no wife, no mistress should ever have been fonder! She did tell him everything as they stood together on the ramparts of the old Saxon castle. Then he had kissed her, and pressed her to his heart,—not because he loved her, but because he was generous. She had partly understood it all,—but yet had not understood it thoroughly. He did not assure her of his love,—but then she was a wife, and would have admitted no love that was sinful. When she returned to Dresden that night she stood gazing at herself in the glass and saw that there was nothing there to attract the love of such a man as Phineas Finn,—of one who was himself glorious with manly beauty; but yet for her sadness

there was some cure, some possibility of consolation in the fact that she was a wife. Why speak of love at all when marriage was so far out of the question? But now she was a widow and as free as he was,—a widow endowed with ample wealth; and she was the woman to whom he had sworn his love when they had stood together, both young, by the falls of the Linter! How often might they stand there again if only his constancy would equal hers?

She had seen him once since Fate had made her a widow; but then she had been but a few days a widow, and his life had at that moment been in strange jeopardy. There had certainly been no time then for other love than that which the circumstances and the sorrow of the hour demanded from their mutual friendship. From that day, from the first moment in which she had heard of his arrest, every thought, every effort of her mind had been devoted to his affairs. So great was his peril and so strange, that it almost wiped out from her mind the remembrance of her own condition. Should they hang him,—undoubtedly she would die. Such a termination to all her aspirations for him whom she had selected as her god upon earth would utterly crush her. She had borne much, but she could never bear that. Should he escape, but escape ingloriously; ah, then he should know what the devotion of a woman could do for a man! But if he should leave his prison with flying colours, and come forth a hero to the world, how would it be with her then? She could foresee and understand of what nature would be the ovation with which he would be greeted. She had already heard what the Duchess was doing and saying. She knew how eager on his behalf were Lord and Lady Cantrip.

She discussed the matter daily with her sister-in-law, and knew what her brother thought. If the acquittal were perfect, there would certainly be an ovation,—in which, was it not certain to her, that she would be forgotten? And she heard much, too, of Madame Goesler. And now there came the news. Madame Goesler had gone to Prague, to Cracow,—and where not?—spending her wealth, employing her wits, bearing fatigue, openly before the world on this man's behalf; and had done so successfully. She had found this evidence of the key, and now because the tracings of a key had been discovered by a woman, people were ready to believe that he was innocent, as to whose innocence she, Laura Kennedy, would have been willing to stake her own life from the beginning of the affair!

Why had it not been her lot to go to Prague? Would not she have drunk up Esil, or swallowed a crocodile against any she-Laertes that would have thought to rival and to parallel her great love? Would not she have piled up new Ossas, had the opportunity been given her? Womanlike she had gone to him in her trouble,—had burst through his prison doors, had thrown herself on his breast, and had wept at his feet. But of what avail had been that? This strange female, this Moabitish woman, had gone to Prague, and had found a key,—and everybody said that the thing was done! How she hated the strange woman, and remembered all the evil things that had been said of the intruder! She told herself over and over again that had it been any one else than this half-foreigner, this German Jewess, this intriguing unfeminine upstart, she could have borne it. Did not all the world know that the woman for the last two years had been the mistress

of that old doting Duke who was now dead? Had one ever heard who was her father or who was her mother? Had it not always been declared of her that she was a pushing, dangerous, scheming creature? And then she was old enough to be his mother, though by some Medean tricks known to such women, she was able to postpone,—not the ravages of age,—but the manifestation of them to the eyes of the world. In all of which charges poor Lady Laura wronged her rival foully; in that matter of age especially, for, as it happened, Madame Goesler was by some months the younger of the two. But Lady Laura was a blonde, and trouble had told upon her outwardly, as it is wont to do upon those who are fair-skinned, and, at the same time, high-hearted. But Madame Goesler was a brunette,—swarthy, Lady Laura would have called her —with bright eyes and glossy hair and thin cheeks, and now being somewhat over thirty she was at her best. Lady Laura hated her as a fair woman who has lost her beauty can hate the dark woman who keeps it.

"What made her think of the key?" said Lady Chiltern.

"I don't believe she did think of it. It was an accident."

"Then why did she go?"

"Oh, Violet, do not talk to me about that woman any more, or I shall be mad."

"She has done him good service."

"Very well;—so be it. Let him have the service. I know they would have acquitted him if she had never stirred from London. Oswald says so. But no matter. Let her have her triumph. Only do not talk to me about her. You know what I have thought about her

ever since she first came up in London. Nothing ever surprised me so much as that you should take her by the hand."

"I do not know that I took her specially by the hand."

"You had her down at Harrington."

"Yes; I did. And I do like her. And I know nothing against her. I think you are prejudiced against her, Laura."

"Very well. Of course you think and can say what you please. I hate her, and that is sufficient." Then, after a pause, she added, "Of course he will marry her. I know that well enough. It is nothing to me whom he marries—only,—only,—only, after all that has passed it seems hard upon me that his wife should be the only woman in London that I could not visit."

"Dear Laura, you should control your thoughts about this young man."

"Of course I should;—but I don't. You mean that I am disgracing myself."

"No."

"Yes, you do. Oswald is more candid, and tells me so openly. And yet what have I done? The world has been hard upon me, and I have suffered. Do I desire anything except that he shall be happy and respectable? Do I hope for anything? I will go back and linger out my life at Dresden, where my disgrace can hurt no one." Her sister-in-law with all imaginable tenderness said what she could to console the miserable woman;—but there was no consolation possible. They both knew that Phineas Finn would never renew the offer which he had once made.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FOREIGN BLUDGEON.

In the meantime Madame Goesler, having accomplished the journey from Prague in considerably less than a week, reached London with the blacksmith, the attorney's clerk, and the model of the key. The trial had been adjourned on Wednesday, the 24th of June, and it had been suggested that the jury should be again put into their box on that day week. All manner of inconvenience was to be endured by various members of the legal profession, and sundry irregularities were of necessity sanctioned on this great occasion. The sitting of the court should have been concluded, and everybody concerned should have been somewhere else, but the matter was sufficient to justify almost any departure from routine. A member of the House of Commons was in custody, and it had already been suggested that some action should be taken by the House as to his speedy deliverance. Unless a jury could find him guilty let him be at once restored to his duties and his privileges. The case was involved in difficulties, but in the meantime the jury, who had been taken down by train every day to have a walk in the country in the company of two sheriff's officers, and who had been allowed to dine at Greenwich one day and at Richmond on another in the hope that whitebait with lamb and salad might in some degree console them

for their loss of liberty, were informed that they would be once again put into their box on Wednesday. But Madame Goesler reached London on the Sunday morning, and on the Monday the whole affair respecting the key was unravelled in the presence of the attorney-general, and with the personal assistance of our old friend, Major Mackintosh. Without a doubt the man Mealyus had caused to be made for him in Prague a key which would open the door of the house in Northumberland Street. A key was made in London from the model now brought which did open the door. The attorney-general seemed to think that it would be his duty to ask the judge to call upon the jury to acquit Phineas Finn, and that then the matter must rest forever, unless further evidence could be obtained against Yosef Mealyus. It would not be possible to hang a man for a murder simply because he had fabricated a key,—even though he might possibly have obtained the use of a grey coat for a few hours. There was no tittle of evidence to show that he had ever had the greatcoat on his shoulders, or that he had been out of the house on that night. Lord Fawn, to his infinite disgust, was taken to the prison in which Mealyus was detained, and was confronted with the man, but he could say nothing. Mealyus, at his own suggestion, put on the coat, and stalked about the room in it. But Lord Fawn would not say a word. The person whom he now saw might have been the man in the street, or Mr. Finn might have been the man, or any other man might have been the man. Lord Fawn was very dignified, very reserved, and very unhappy. To his thinking he was the great martyr of this trial. Phineas Finn was be-

coming a hero. Against the twelve jurymen the finger of scorn would never be pointed. But his sufferings must endure for his life,—might probably embitter his life to the very end. Looking into his own future from his present point of view he did not see how he could ever again appear before the eye of the public. And yet with what persistency of conscience had he struggled to be true and honest! On the present occasion he would say nothing. He had seen a man in a grey coat, and for the future would confine himself to that. "You did not see me, my lord," said Mr. Emilius with touching simplicity.

So the matter stood on the Monday afternoon, and the jury had already been told that they might be released on the following Tuesday,—might at any rate hear the judge's charge on that day,—when another discovery was made more wonderful than that of the key. And this was made without any journey to Prague, and might, no doubt, have been made on any day since the murder had been committed. And it was a discovery for not having made which the police force generally was subjected to heavy censure. A beautiful little boy was seen playing in one of those gardens through which the passage runs with a short loaded bludgeon in his hand. He came into the house with the weapon, the maid who was with him having asked the little lord no question on the subject. But luckily it attracted attention, and his little lordship took two gardeners and a coachman and all the nurses to the very spot at which he found it. Before an hour was over he was standing at his father's knee, detailing the fact with great open eyes to two policemen, having by this time become immensely proud of his adventure.

This occurred late on the Monday afternoon, when the noble family was at dinner, and the noble family was considerably disturbed, and at the same time very much interested, by the occurrence. But on the Tuesday morning there was the additional fact established that a bludgeon loaded with lead had been found among the thick grass and undergrowth of shrubs in a spot to which it might easily have been thrown by any one attempting to pitch it over the wall. The news flew about the town like wildfire, and it was now considered certain that the real murderer would be discovered.

But the renewal of the trial was again postponed till the Wednesday, as it was necessary that an entire day should be devoted to the bludgeon. The instrument was submitted to the eyes and hands of persons experienced in such matters, and it was declared on all sides that the thing was not of English manufacture. It was about a foot long, with a leathern thong to the handle, with something of a spring in the shaft, and with the oval loaded knot at the end cased with leathern thongs very minutely and skilfully cut. They who understood modern work in leather gave it as their opinion that the weapon had been made in Paris. It was considered that Mealyus had brought it with him, and concealed it in preparation for this occasion. If the police could succeed in tracing the bludgeon into his hands, or in proving that he had purchased any such instrument, then,—so it was thought,—there would be evidence to justify a police magistrate in sending Mr. Emilius to occupy the place so lately and so long held by poor Phineas Finn. But till that had been done, there could be nothing to connect the preacher with the murder. All who had heard the circumstances of

the case were convinced that Mr. Bonteen had been murdered by the weapon lately discovered, and not by that which Phineas had carried in his pocket,—but no one could adduce proof that it was so. This second bludgeon would no doubt help to remove the difficulty in regard to Phineas, but would not give atonement to the shade of Mr. Bonteen.

Mealyus was confronted with the weapon in the presence of Major Mackintosh, and was told its story;—how it was found in the nobleman's garden by the little boy. At the first moment, with instant readiness, he took the thing in his hand, and looked at it with feigned curiosity. He must have studied his conduct so as to have it ready for such an occasion, thinking that it might some day occur. But with all his presence of mind he could not keep the tell-tale blood from mounting.

"You don't know anything about it, Mr. Mealyus?" said one of the policemen present, looking closely into his face. "Of course you need not criminate yourself."

"What should I know about it? No;—I know nothing about the stick. I never had such a stick, or, as I believe, saw one before." He did it very well, but he could not keep the blood from rising to his cheeks. The policemen were sure that he was the murderer,—but what could they do?

"You saved his life, certainly," said the Duchess to her friend on the Sunday afternoon. That had been before the bludgeon was found.

"I do not believe that they could have touched a hair of his head," said Madame Goesler.

"Would they not? Everybody felt sure that he would be hung. Would it not have been awful? I

do not see how you are to help becoming man and wife now, for all the world are talking about you." Madame Goesler smiled, and said that she was quite indifferent to the world's talk." On the Tuesday after the bludgeon was found, the two ladies met again. "Now it was known that it was the clergyman," said the Duchess.

"I never doubted it."

"He must have been a brave man for a foreigner, —to have attacked Mr. Bonteen all alone in the street, when any one might have seen him. I don't feel to hate him so very much after all. As for that little wife of his, she has got no more than she deserved."

"Mr. Finn will surely be acquitted now."

"Of course he 'll be acquitted. Nobody doubts about it. That is all settled, and it is a shame that he should be kept in prison even over to-day. I should think they 'll make him a peer, and give him a pension, —or at the very least appoint him secretary to something. I do wish Plantagenet had n't been in such a hurry about that nasty Board of Trade, and then he might have gone there. He could n't very well be Privy Seal, unless they do make him a peer. You would n't mind, would you, my dear?"

"I think you 'll find that they will console Mr. Finn with something less gorgeous than that. You have succeeded in seeing him, of course?"

"Plantagenet would n't let me, but I know who did."

"Some lady?"

"Oh yes,—a lady. Half the men about the clubs went to him, I believe."

"Who was she?"

"You won't be ill-natured?"

"I 'll endeavour at any rate to keep my temper, Duchess."

"It was Lady Laura."

"I supposed so."

"They say she is frantic about him, my dear."

"I never believe those things. Women do not get frantic about men in these days. They have been very old friends and have known each other for many years. Her brother, Lord Chiltern, was his particular friend. I do not wonder that she should have seen him."

"Of course you know that she is a widow."

"Oh yes;—Mr. Kennedy had died long before I left England."

"And she is very rich. She has got all Loughlinter for her life, and her own fortune back again. I will bet you anything you like that she offers to share it with him."

"It may be so," said Madame Goesler, while the slightest blush in the world suffused her cheek.

"And I 'll make you another bet, and give you any odds."

"What is that?"

"That he refuses her. It is quite a common thing now-a-days for ladies to make the offer, and for gentlemen to refuse. Indeed, it was felt to be so inconvenient while it was thought that gentlemen had not the alternative, that some men became afraid of going into society. It is better understood now."

"Such things have been done, I do not doubt," said Madame Goesler, who had ventured to avert her face without making the motion apparent to her friend.

"When this is all over, we 'll get him down to Matching, and manage better than that. I should think

they 'll hardly go on with the session, as nobody has done anything since the arrest. While Mr. Finn has been in prison, legislation has come to a standstill altogether. Even Plantagenet does n't work above twelve hours a day, and I 'm told that poor Lord Fawn has n't been near his office for the last fortnight. When the excitement is over they 'll never be able to get back to their business before the grouse. There 'll be a few dinners, of course, just as a compliment to the great man,—but London will break up after that, I should think. You won't come in for so much of the glory as you would have done if they had n't found the stick. Little Lord Frederick must have his share, you know."

"It 's the most singular case I ever knew," said Sir Simon Slope that night to one of his friends. "We certainly should have hanged him but for the two accidents, and yet neither of them brings us a bit nearer to hanging any one else."

"What a pity!"

"It shows the danger of circumstantial evidence,—and yet without it one never could get at any murder. I 'm very glad, you know, that the key and the stick did turn up. I never thought much about the coat."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE VERDICT.

On the Wednesday morning Phineas Finn was again brought into the court, and again placed in the dock. There was a general feeling that he should not again have been so disgraced; but he was still a prisoner under a charge of murder, and it was explained to him that the circumstances of the case and the stringency of the law did not admit of his being seated elsewhere during his trial. He treated the apology with courteous scorn. He should not have chosen, he said, to have made any change till after the trial was over, even had any change been permitted. When he was brought up the steps into the dock after the judges had taken their seats, there was almost a shout of applause. The crier was very angry, and gave it to be understood that everybody would be arrested unless everybody was silent; but the chief-justice said not a word, nor did those great men the attorney- and solicitor-general express any displeasure. The bench was again crowded with members of Parliament from both Houses, and on this occasion Mr. Gresham himself had accompanied Lord Cantrip. The two Dukes were there, and men no bigger than Laurence Fitzgibbon were forced to subject themselves to the benevolence of the under-sheriff.

Phineas himself was pale and haggard. It was observed that he leaned forward on the rail of the dock

all the day, not standing upright as he had done before; and they who watched him closely said that he never once raised his eyes on this day to meet those of the men opposite to him on the bench, although heretofore throughout the trial he had stood with his face raised so as to look directly at those who were there seated. On this occasion he kept his eyes fixed upon the speaker. But the whole bearing of the man, his gestures, his gait, and his countenance were changed during the first long week of his trial, his uprightness, the manly beauty of his countenance, and the general courage and tranquillity of his deportment had been conspicuous. Whatever had been his fears, no mark of fear had disfigured his countenance. He had never once condescended to the exhibition of any outward show of effrontery. Through six weary days he had stood there, supported by a manhood sufficient for the terrible emergency. But now it seemed that at any rate the outward grace of his demeanour had deserted him. But it was known that he had been ill during the last few days, and it had been whispered through the court that he had not slept at nights. Since the adjournment of the court there had been bulletins as to his health, and everybody knew that the confinement was beginning to tell upon him.

On the present occasion the proceedings of the day were opened by the attorney-general, who began by apologising to the jury. Apologies to the jury had been very frequent during the trial, and each apology had called forth fresh grumbling. On this occasion the foreman expressed a hope that the legislature would consider the condition of things which made it possible that twelve gentlemen all concerned extensively in

business should be confined for fourteen days because a mistake had been made in the evidence as to a murder. Then the chief-justice, bowing down his head and looking at them over the rim of his spectacles with an expression of wisdom that almost convinced them, told them that he was aware of no mistake in the evidence. It might become their duty, on the evidence which they had heard and the further evidence which they would hear, to acquit the prisoner at the bar; but not on that account would there have been any mistake or erroneous procedure in the court, other than such error on the part of the prosecution in regard to the alleged guilt of the prisoner as it was the general and special duty of jurors to remedy. Then he endeavoured to reconcile them to their sacrifice by describing the importance and glorious British nature of their position. "My lord," said one of the jurors, "if you was a salesman, and had n't got no partner, only a very young 'un, you 'd know what it was to be kept out of your business for a fortnight." Then that salesman wagged his head, and put his handkerchief up to his eyes, and there was pity also for him in the court.

After that the attorney-general went on. His learned friend on the other side, and he nodded to Mr. Chaffanbrass, had got some further evidence to submit to them on behalf of the prisoner who was still on his trial before them. He now addressed them with the view of explaining to them that if that evidence should be such as he believed, it would become his duty on behalf of the Crown to join with his learned friend in requesting the court to direct the jury to acquit the prisoner. Not the less on that account would it be the duty of the jury to form their own opinion as to

the credibility of the fresh evidence which would be brought before them.

"There won't be much doubt about the credibility," said Mr. Chaffanbrass, rising in his place. "I am not a bit afraid about the credibility, gentlemen; and I don't think that you need be afraid either. You must understand, gentlemen, that I am now going on calling evidence for the defence. My last witness was the right honourable Mr. Monk, who spoke as to character. My next will be a Bohemian blacksmith named Praska,—Peter Praska,—who naturally can't speak a word of English, and unfortunately can't speak a word of German either. But we have got an interpreter, and I dare say we shall find out without much delay what Peter Praska has to tell us." Then Peter Praska was handed up to the rostrum for the witnesses, and the man learned in Czech and also in English was placed close to him, and sworn to give a true interpretation.

Mealyus the unfortunate one was also in court, brought in between two policemen, and the Bohemian blacksmith swore that he had made a certain key on the instructions of the man he now saw. The reader need not be further troubled with all the details of the evidence about the key. It was clearly proved that in a village near to Prague a key had been made such as would open Mr. Meager's door in Northumberland Street, and it was also proved that it was made from a mould supplied by Mealyus. This was done by the joint evidence of Mr. Meager and of the blacksmith. "And if I lose my key," said the reverend gentleman, "why should I not have another made? Did I ever deny it? This, I think, is very strange." But Mr. Emilius was very quickly walked back out of the court

between the two policemen, as his presence would not be required in regard to the further evidence regarding the bludgeon.

Mr. Chaffanbrass, having finished his business with the key, at once began with the bludgeon. The bludgeon was produced, and was handed up to the bench, and inspected by the chief-justice. The instrument created great interest. Men rose on tiptoe to look at it even from a distance, and the Prime Minister was envied because for a moment it was placed in his hands. As the large-eyed little boy who had found it was not yet six years old, there was a difficulty in perfecting the thread of the evidence. It was not held to be proper to administer an oath to an infant. But in a roundabout way it was proved that the identical bludgeon had been picked up in the garden. There was an elaborate lawyer's plan produced of the passage, the garden, and the wall,—with the steps on which it was supposed that the blow had been struck; and the spot was indicated on which the child had said that he had found the weapon. Then certain workers in leather were questioned, who agreed in asserting that no such instrument as that handed to them had ever been made in England. After that, two scientific chemists told the jury that they had minutely examined the knob of the instrument with reference to the discovery of human blood,—but in vain. They were, however, of opinion that the man might very readily have been killed by the instrument without any effusion of blood at the moment of the blows. This seemed to the jury to be the less necessary, as three or four surgeons who had examined the murdered man's head had already told them that in all probability there had

been no such effusion. When the judges went out to lunch at two o'clock, the jury were trembling as to their fate for another night.

The fresh evidence, however, had been completed, and on the return of the court Mr. Chaffanbrass said that he should only speak a very few words. For a few words he must ask indulgence, though he knew them to be irregular. But it was the speciality of this trial that everything in it was irregular, and he did not think that his learned friend the attorney-general would dispute the privilege. The attorney-general said nothing, and Mr. Chaffanbrass went on with his little speech, —with which he took up the greatest part of an hour. It was thought to have been unnecessary, as nearly all that he said was said again—and was sure to have been so said,—by the judge. It was not his business, —the business of him, Mr. Chaffanbrass,—to accuse another man of the murder of Mr. Bonteen. It was not for him to tell the jury whether there was or was not evidence on which any other man should be sent to trial. But it was his bounden duty in defence of his client to explain to them that a collection of facts tending to criminate another man,—which when taken together made a fair probability that another man had committed the crime,—rendered it quite out of the question that they should declare his client to be guilty. He did not believe that there was a single person in the court who was not now convinced of the innocence of his client;—but it was not permitted to him to trust himself solely to that belief. It was his duty to show them that of necessity they must acquit his client. When Mr. Chaffanbrass sat down, the attorney-general waived any right he might have of further reply.

It was half-past three when the judge began his charge. He would, he said, do his best to enable the jury to complete their tedious duty, so as to return to their families on that night. Indeed, he would certainly finish his charge before he rose from the seat, let the hour be what it might; and though time must be occupied by him in going through the evidence and explaining the circumstances of this very singular trial, it might not be improbable that the jury would be able to find their verdict without any great delay among themselves. "There won't be any delay at all, my lord," said the suffering and very irrational salesman. The poor man was again rebuked, mildly, and the chief-justice continued his charge.

As it occupied four hours in the delivery, of which by far the greater part was taken up in recapitulating and sifting evidence with which the careful reader, if such there be, has already been made too intimately acquainted, the account of it here shall be very short. The nature of circumstantial evidence was explained, and the truth of much that had been said in regard to such evidence by Mr. Chaffanbrass admitted;—but, nevertheless, it would be impossible,—so said his lordship,—to administer justice if guilt could never be held to have been proved by circumstantial evidence alone. In this case it might not improbably seem to them that the gentleman who had so long stood before them as a prisoner at the bar had been the victim of a most singularly untoward chain of circumstances, from which he would have to be liberated should he be at last liberated, by another chain of circumstances as singular; but it was his duty to inform them now, after they had heard what he might call the double evidence, that he

could not have given it to them as his opinion that the charge had been brought home against the prisoner, even had those circumstances of the Bohemian key and of the foreign bludgeon never been brought to light. He did not mean to say that the evidence had not justified the trial. He thought that the trial had been fully justified. Nevertheless, had nothing arisen to point to the possibility of guilt in another man, he should not the less have found himself bound in duty to explain to them that the thread of the evidence against Mr. Finn had been incomplete,—or, he would rather say, the weight of it had been, to his judgment, insufficient. He was the more intent on saying so much, as he was desirous of making it understood that, even had the bludgeon still remained buried beneath the leaves, had the manufacturer of that key never been discovered, the great evil would not, he thought, have fallen upon them of punishing the innocent instead of the guilty,—that most awful evil of taking innocent blood in their just attempt to punish murder by death. As far as he knew, to the best of his belief, that calamity had never fallen upon the country in his time. The administration of the law was so careful of life that the opposite evil was fortunately more common. He said so much because he would not wish that this case should be quoted hereafter as showing the possible danger of circumstantial evidence. It had been a case in which the evidence given as to character alone had been sufficient to make him feel that the circumstances which seemed to affect the prisoner injuriously could not be taken as establishing his guilt. But now other and imposing circumstances had been brought to light, and he was sure that the jury would have no difficulty

with their verdict. A most frightful murder had no doubt been committed in the dead of the night. A gentleman coming home from his club had been killed, —probably by the hand of one who had himself moved in the company of gentlemen. A plot had been made, —had probably been thought of for days and weeks before,—and had been executed with extreme audacity, in order that an enemy might be removed. There could, he thought, be but little doubt that Mr. Bonteen had been killed by the instrument found in the garden, and if so, he certainly had not been killed by the prisoner, who could not be supposed to have carried two bludgeons in his pocket, and whose quarrel with the murdered man had been so recent as to have admitted of no preparation. They had heard the story of Mr. Meager's grey coat, and of the construction of the duplicate key for Mr. Meager's house-door. It was not for him to tell them on the present occasion whether these stories, and the evidence by which they had been supported, tended to affix guilt elsewhere. It was beyond his province to advert to such probability or possibility; but undoubtedly the circumstances might be taken by them as an assistance, if assistance were needed, in coming to a consideration on the charge against the prisoner. "Gentlemen," he said at last, "I think you will find no difficulty in acquitting the prisoner of the murder laid to his charge," whereupon the jurymen put their heads together; and the foreman, without half a minute's delay, declared that they were unanimous, and that they found the prisoner Not Guilty. "And we are of opinion," said the foreman, "that Mr. Finn should not have been put upon his trial on such evidence as has been brought before us."

The necessity of liberating poor Phineas from the horrors of his position was too urgent to allow of much attention being given at the moment to this protest. "Mr. Finn," said the judge, addressing the poor broken wretch, "you have been acquitted of the odious and abominable charge brought against you, with the concurrence, I am sure, not only of those who have heard this trial, but of all your countrymen and countrywomen. I need not say that you will leave the dock with no stain on your character. It has, I hope, been some consolation to you in your misfortune to hear the terms in which you have been spoken of by such friends as they who came here to give their testimony on your behalf. It is, and it has been, a great sorrow to me, to see such a one as you subjected to so unmerited an ignominy; but a man educated in the laws of his country, as you have been, and understanding its constitution fundamentally, as you do, will probably have acknowledged that, great as has been the misfortune to you personally, nothing more than a proper attempt has been made to execute justice. I trust that you may speedily find yourself able to resume your place among the legislators of the country." Thus Phineas Finn was acquitted, and the judges, collecting up their robes, trooped off from the bench, following the long line of their assessors who had remained even to that hour to hear the last word of the trial. Mr. Chaffanbrass collected his papers, with the assistance of Mr. Wickerby,—totally disregardful of his junior counsel, and the attorney- and solicitor-general congratulated each other on the successful termination of a very disagreeable piece of business.

And Phineas was discharged. According to the

ordinary meaning of the words he was now to go about his business as he pleased, the law having no further need of his person. We can understand how in common cases the prisoner discharged on his aquittal,—who probably in nine cases out of ten is conscious of his own guilt,—may feel the sweetness of his freedom and enjoy his immunity from danger with a light heart. He is received probably by his wife or young woman,—or perhaps, having no wife or young woman to receive him, betakes himself to his usual haunts. The interest which has been felt in his career is over, and he is no longer the hero of an hour;—but he is a free man, and may drink his gin-and-water where he pleases. Perhaps a small admiring crowd may welcome him as he passes out into the street, but he has become nobody before he reaches the corner. But it could not be so with this discharged prisoner,—either as regarded himself and his own feelings, or as regarded his friends. When the moment came he had hardly as yet thought about the immediate future,—had not considered how he would live, or where, during the next few months. The sensations of the moment had been so full, sometimes of agony and of others of anticipated triumph, that he had not attempted as yet to make for himself any schemes. The Duchess of Omnium had suggested that he would be received back into society with an elaborate course of fashionable dinners; but that view of his return to the world had certainly not occurred to him. When he was led down from the dock he hardly knew whither he was being taken, and when he found himself in a small room attached to the court, clasped on one arm by Mr. Low and on the other by Lord Chiltern, he did not know what they would propose to

him,—nor had he considered what answer he would make to any proposition. "At last you are safe," said Mr. Low.

"But think what he has suffered," said Lord Chiltern.

Phineas looked round to see if there was any other friend present. Certainly among all his friends he had thought most of her who had travelled half across Europe for evidence to save him. He had seen Madame Goesler last on the evening preceding the night of the murder, and had not even heard from her since. But he had been told what she had done for him, and now he had almost fancied that he would have found her waiting for him. He smiled first at the one man and then at the other, and made an effort to carry himself with his ordinary tranquillity. "It will be all right now, I dare say," he said. "I wonder whether I could have a glass of water."

He sat down while the water was brought to him, and his two friends stood over him, hardly knowing how to do more than support him by their presence.

Then Lord Cantrip made his way into the room. He had sat on the bench to the last, whereas the other two had gone down to receive the prisoner when acquitted;—and with him came Sir Harry Coldfoot, the Home Secretary. "My friend," said the former, "the bitter day has passed over you, and I hope that the bitterness will soon pass away also." Phineas again attempted to smile as he held the hand of the man with whom he had formerly been associated in office.

"I should not intrude, Mr. Finn," said Sir Harry, "did I not feel myself bound in a special manner to express my regret at the great trouble to which you have been subjected." Phineas rose, and bowed stiffly.

He had conceived that every one connected with the administration of the law had believed him to be guilty, and none in his present mood could be dear to him but they who from the beginning trusted in his innocence. "I am requested by Mr. Gresham," continued Sir Harry, "to express to you his entire sympathy, and his joy that all this is at last over." Phineas tried to make some little speech, but utterly failed. Then Sir Harry left them, and he burst out into tears.

"Who can be surprised?" said Lord Cantrip. "The marvel is that he should have been able to bear it so long."

"It would have crushed me utterly, long since," said the other lord. Then there was a question asked as to what he would do, and Mr. Low proposed that he should be allowed to take Phineas to his own house for a few days. His wife, he said, had known their friend so long and so intimately that she might perhaps be able to make herself more serviceable than any other lady, and at their house Phineas could receive his sisters just as he would at his own. His sisters had been lodging near the prison almost ever since the committal, and it had been thought well to remove them to Mr. Low's house in order that they might meet their brother there.

"I think I 'll go to my—own room—in Marlborough Street." These were the first intelligible words he had uttered since he had been led out of the dock, and to that resolution he adhered. Lord Cantrip offered the retirements of a country house belonging to himself within an hour's journey of London, and Lord Chiltern declared that Harrington Hall, which Phineas knew, was altogether at his service,—but Phineas de-

cided in favour of Mrs. Bunce, and to Great Marlborough Street he was taken by Mr. Low.

"I 'll come to you to-morrow,—with my wife,"—said Lord Chiltern, as he was going.

"Not to-morrow, Chiltern. But tell your wife how deeply I value her friendship." Lord Cantrip also offered to come, but was asked to wait awhile. "I am afraid I am hardly fit for visitors yet. All the strength seems to have been knocked out of me this last week."

Mr. Low accompanied him to his lodgings, and then handed him over to Mrs. Bunce, promising that his two sisters should come to him early on the following morning. On that evening he would prefer to be quite alone. He would not allow the barrister even to go upstairs with him; and when he had entered his room, almost rudely begged his weeping landlady to leave him.

"Oh, Mr. Phineas, let me do something for you," said the poor woman. "You have not had a bit of anything all day. Let me get you just a cup of tea and a chop."

In truth, he had dined when the judges went out to their lunch,—dined as he had been wont to dine since the trial had been commenced,—and wanted nothing. She might bring him tea, he said, if she would leave him for an hour. And then at last he was alone. He stood up in the middle of the room, stretching forth his hands, and putting one first to his breast and then to his brow, feeling himself as though doubting his own identity. Could it be that the last week had been real,—that everything had not been a dream? Had he in truth been suspected of a murder and tried for his life? And then he thought of him who had been

murdered, of Mr. Bonteen, his enemy. Was he really gone,—the man who the other day was to have been Chancellor of the Exchequer,—the scornful, arrogant, loud, boastful man? He had hardly thought of Mr. Bonteen before, during these weeks of his own incarceration. He had heard all the details of the murder with a fulness that had been at last complete. The man who had oppressed him, and whom he had at times almost envied, was indeed gone, and the world for a while had believed that he, Phineas Finn, had been the man's murderer!

And now what should be his own future life? One thing seemed certain to him. He could never again go into the House of Commons, and sit there, an ordinary man of business, with other ordinary men. He had been so hacked and hewed about, so exposed to the gaze of the vulgar, so mauled by the public, that he could never more be anything but the wretched being who had been tried for the murder of his enemy. The pith had been taken out of him, and he was no longer a man fit for use. He could never more enjoy that freedom from self-consciousness, that inner tranquillity of spirit, which are essential to public utility. Then he remembered certain lines which had long been familiar to him, and he repeated them aloud, with some conceit that they were apposite to him:—

> "The true gods sigh for the cost and pain,—
> For the reed that grows never more again
> As a reed with the reeds in the river."

He sat drinking his tea, still thinking of himself,—knowing how infinitely better it would be for him that he should indulge in no such thought, till an idea

struck him, and he got up, and, drawing back the blinds from the open window, looked out into the night. It was the last day of June, and the weather was very sultry; but the night was dark, and it was now near midnight. On a sudden he took his hat, and feeling with a smile for the latch key which he always carried in his pocket,—thinking of the latch key which had been made at Prague for the lock of a house in Northumberland Street, New Road, he went down to the front door. "You 'll be back soon, Mr. Finn, won't you now?" said Mrs. Bunce, who had heard his step, and had remained up, thinking it better this, the first night of his return, not to rest till he had gone to his bed.

"Why should I be back soon?" he said, turning upon her. But then he remembered that she had been one of those who were true to him, and he took her hand and was gracious to her. "I will be back soon, Mrs. Bunce, and you need fear nothing. But recollect how little I have had of liberty lately. I have not even had a walk for six weeks. You cannot wonder that I should wish to roam about a little." Nevertheless she would have preferred that he should not have gone out all alone on that night.

He had taken off the black mourning coat which he had worn during the trial, and had put on that very grey garment by which it had been sought to identify him with the murderer. So clad he crossed Regent Street into Hanover Square, and from thence went a short way down Bond Street, and by Bruton Street into Berkeley Square. He took exactly the reverse of the route by which he had returned home from the club on the night of the murder. Every now and then he

trembled as he passed some figure which might be that of a man who would recognise him. But he walked fast, and went on till he came to the spot at which the steps descend from the street into the passage,—the very spot at which the murder had been committed. He looked down it with an awful dread, and stood there as though he were fascinated, thinking of all the details which he had heard throughout the trial. Then he looked around him, and listened whether there were any step approaching through the passage. Hearing none and seeing no one he at last descended, and for the first time in his life passed through that way into Bolton Row. Here it was that the wretch of whom he had now heard so much had waited for his enemy, —the wretch for whom during the last six weeks he had been mistaken. Heavens!—that men who had known him should have believed him to have done such a deed as that! He remembered well having shown the life-preserver to Erle and Fitzgibbon at the door of the club; and it had been thought that after having so shown it he had used it for the purpose to which in his joke he had alluded! Were men so blind, so ignorant of nature, so little capable of discerning the truth as this? Then he went on till he came to the end of Clarges Street, and looked up the mews opposite to it,—the mews from which the man had been seen to hurry. The place was altogether unknown to him. He had never thought whither it had led when passing it on his way up from Piccadilly to the club. But now he entered the mews so as to test the evidence that had been given, and found that it brought him by a turn close up to the spot at which he had been described as having been last seen by

Erle and Fitzgibbon. When there he went on, and crossed the street, and looking back saw the club was lighted up. Then it struck him for the first time that it was the night of the week on which the members were wont to assemble. Should he pluck up courage, and walk in among them? He had not lost his right of entry there because he had been accused of murder. He was the same now as heretofore,—if he could only fancy himself to be the same. Why not go in, and have done with all this? He would be the wonder of the club for twenty minutes, and then it would all be over. He stood close under the shade of a heavy building as he thought of this, but he found that he could not do it. He had known from the beginning that he could not do it. How callous, how hard, how heartless, must he have been, had such a course been possible to him! He again repeated the lines to himself—

> "The reed that grows never more again
> As a reed with the reeds in the river."

He felt sure that never again would he enter that room, in which no doubt all those assembled were now talking about him.

As he returned home he tried to make out for himself some plan for his future life,—but interspersed with any idea that he could weave were the figures of two women, Lady Laura Kennedy and Madame Max Goesler. The former could be nothing to him but a friend; and though no other friend would love him as she loved him, yet she could not influence his life. She was very wealthy, but her wealth could be nothing to him. She would heap it all upon him if he would

take it. He understood and knew that. Taking no pride to himself that it was so, feeling no conceit in his love, he was conscious of her devotion to him. He was poor, broken in spirit, and almost without a future;—and yet could her devotion avail him nothing!

But how might it be with that other woman? Were she, after all that had passed between them, to consent to be his wife,—and it might be that she would consent,—how would the world be with him then? He would be known as Madame Goesler's husband, and have to sit at the bottom of her table,—and be talked of as the man who had been tried for the murder of Mr. Bonteen. Look at it in which way he might, he thought that no life could any longer be possible to him in London.

CHAPTER XV.

PHINEAS AFTER THE TRIAL.

Ten days passed by, and Phineas Finn had not been out of his lodgings till after daylight, and then he only prowled about in the manner described in the last chapter. His sisters had returned to Ireland, and he saw no one, even in his own room, but two or three of his most intimate friends. Among those Mr. Low and Lord Chiltern were the most frequently with him, but Fitzgibbon, Barrington Erle, and Mr. Monk had also been admitted. People had called by the hundred, till Mrs. Bunce was becoming almost tired of her lodger's popularity; but they came only to inquire,—because it had been reported that Mr. Finn was not well after his imprisonment. The Duchess of Omnium had written to him various notes, asking when he would come to her, and what she could do for him. Would he dine, would he spend a quiet evening, would he go to Matching? Finally, would he become her guest and the Duke's next September for the partridge shooting? They would have a few friends with them, and Madame Goesler would be one of the number. Having had this by him for a week, he had not as yet answered the invitation. He had received two or three notes from Lady Laura, who had frankly explained to him that if he were really ill she would of course go to him, but that as matters stood she could not do

so without displeasing her brother. He had answered each note by an assurance that his first visit should be made in Portman Square. To Madame Goesler he had written a letter of thanks,—a letter which had in truth cost him some pains. "I know," he said, "for how much I have to thank you, but I do not know in what words to do it. I ought to be with you telling you in person of my gratitude; but I must own to you that for the present what has occurred has so unmanned me that I am unfit for the interview. I should only weep in your presence like a school-girl, and you would despise me." It was a long letter, containing many references to the circumstances of the trial, and to his own condition of mind throughout its period. Her answer to him, which was very short, was as follows:—

"Park Lane, Sunday—.

"My dear Mr. Finn,—I can well understand that for a while you should be too agitated by what has passed to see your friends. Remember, however, that you owe it to them as well as to yourself not to sink into seclusion. Send me a line when you think that you can come to me that I may be at home. My journey to Prague was nothing. You forget that I am constantly going to Vienna on business connected with my own property there. Prague lies but a few hours out of the route.

"Most sincerely yours,

"M. M. G."

His friends who did see him urged him constantly to bestir himself, and Mr. Monk pressed him very much to come down to the House. "Walk in with me

to-night, and take your seat as though nothing had happened," said Mr. Monk.

"But so much has happened."

"Nothing has happened to alter your outward position as a man. No doubt many will flock round you to congratulate you, and your first half-hour will be disagreeable; but then the thing will have been done. You owe it to your constituents to do so." Then Phineas for the first time expressed an opinion that he would resign his seat,—that he would take the Chiltern Hundreds, and retire altogether from public life.

"Pray do nothing of the kind," said Mr. Monk.

"I do not think you quite understand," said Phineas, "how such an ordeal as this works upon a man, how it may change a man, and knock out of him what little strength there ever was there. I feel that I am broken, past any patching up or mending. Of course it ought not to be so. A man should be made of better stuff; —but one is only what one is."

"We 'll put off the discussion for another week," said Mr. Monk.

"There came a letter to me when I was in prison from one of the leading men at Tankerville, saying that I ought to resign. I know they all thought that I was guilty. I do not care to sit for a place where I was so judged,—even if I was fit any longer for a seat in Parliament." He had never felt convinced that Mr. Monk had himself believed with confidence his innocence, and he spoke with soreness, and almost with anger.

"A letter from one individual should never be allowed to create interference between a member and his constituents. It should simply be answered to that

effect, and then ignored. As to the belief of the townspeople in your innocence,—what is to guide you? I believed you innocent with all my heart."

"Did you?"

"But there was always sufficient possibility of your guilt to prevent a rational man from committing himself to the expression of an absolute conviction." The young member's brow became black as he heard this. "I can see that I offend you by saying so,—but if you will think of it, I must be right. You were on your trial; and I as your friend was bound to await the result,—with much confidence, because I knew you; but with no conviction, because both you and I are human and fallible. If the electors at Tankerville, or any great proportion of them, express a belief that you are unfit to represent them because of what has occurred, I shall be the last to recommend you to keep your seat;—but I shall be surprised indeed if they should do so. If there were a general election to-morrow, I should regard your seat as one of the safest in England."

Both Mr. Low and Lord Chiltern were equally urgent with him to return to his usual mode of life,—using different arguments for their purpose. Lord Chiltern told him plainly that he was weak and womanly,—or rather that he would be were he to continue to dread the faces of his fellow-creatures. The master of the Brake hounds himself was a man less gifted than Phineas Finn, and therefore hardly capable of understanding the exaggerated feelings of the man who had recently been tried for his life. Lord Chiltern was affectionate, tender-hearted, and true;—but there were no vacillating fibres in his composition. The balance

which regulated his conduct was firmly set, and went well. The clock never stopped, and wanted but little looking after. But the works were somewhat rough, and the seconds were not scored. He had, however, been quite true to Phineas during the dark time, and might now say what he pleased. "I am womanly," said Phineas. "I begin to feel it. But I can't alter my nature."

"I never was so much surprised in my life," said Lord Chiltern. "When I used to look at you in the dock, by Heaven, I envied you your pluck and strength."

"I was burning up the stock of coals, Chiltern."

"You 'll come all right after a few weeks. You 've been knocked out of time;—that 's the truth of it."

Mr. Low treated his patient with more indulgence; but he also was surprised, and hardly understood the nature of the derangement of the mechanism in the instrument which he was desirous of repairing. "I should go abroad for a few months if I were you," said Mr. Low.

"I should stick at the first inn I got too," said Phineas. "I think I am better here. By-and-by I shall travel, I dare say,—all over the world, as far as my money will last. But for the present I am only fit to sit still."

Mrs. Low had seen him more than once, and had been very kind to him; but she also failed to understand. "I always thought that he was such a manly fellow," she said to her husband.

"If you mean personal courage, there is no doubt that he possesses it,—as completely now, probably, as ever."

"Oh yes;—he could go over to Flanders and let that lord shoot at him; and he could ride brutes of horses, and not care about breaking his neck. That 's not what I mean. I thought that he could face the world with dignity;—but now it seems that he breaks down."

"He has been very roughly used, my dear."

"So he has,—and tenderly used too. Nobody has had better friends. I thought he would have been more manly."

The property of manliness in a man is a great possession, but perhaps there is none that is less understood,—which is more generally accorded where it does not exist, or more frequently disallowed where it prevails. There are not many who ever make up their minds as to what constitutes manliness, or even inquire within themselves upon the subject. The woman's error, occasioned by her natural desire for a master, leads her to look for a certain outward magnificence of demeanour, a pretended indifference to stings and little torments, a would-be superiority to the bread-and-butter side of life, an unreal assumption of personal grandeur. But a robe of State such as this,—however well the garment may be worn with practice,—can never be the raiment natural to a man; and men, dressing themselves in women's eyes, have consented to walk about in buckram. A composure of the eye, which has been studied, a reticence as to the little things of life, a certain slowness of speech unless the occasion call for passion, an indifference to small surroundings, these,—joined, of course, with personal bravery,—are supposed to constitute manliness. That personal bravery is required in the composition of man-

liness must be conceded, though, of all the ingredients needed, it is the lowest in value. But the first requirement of all must be described by a negative. Manliness is not compatible with affectation. Women's virtues, all feminine attributes, may be marred by affectation, but the virtues and the vice may co-exist. An affected man, too, may be honest, may be generous, may be pious;—but surely he cannot be manly. The self-conscious assumption of any outward manner, the striving to add,—even though it be but a tenth of a cubit to the height,—is fatal, and will at once banish the all but divine attribute. Before the man can be manly, the gifts which make him so must be there, collected by him slowly, unconsciously, as are his bones, his flesh, and his blood. They cannot be put on like a garment for the nonce,—as may a little learning. A man cannot become faithful to his friends, unsuspicious before the world, gentle with women, loving with children, considerate to his inferiors, kindly with servants, tender-hearted with all,—and at the same time be frank, of open speech, with springing eager energies,—simply because he desires it. These things, which are the attributes of manliness, must come of training on a nature not ignoble. But they are the very opposites, the antipodes, the direct antagonism, of that staring, posed, bewhiskered and bewigged deportment, that nil admirari, self-remembering assumption of manliness, that endeavour of twopence halfpenny to look as high as threepence, which, when you prod it through, has in it nothing deeper than deportment. We see the two things daily, side by side, close to each other. Let a man put his hat down, and you shall say whether he has deposited it with affectation or true nature. The

natural man will probably be manly. The affected man cannot be so.

Mrs. Low was wrong when she accused our hero of being unmanly. Had his imagination been less alert in looking into the minds of men, and in picturing to himself the thoughts of others in reference to the crime with which he had been charged, he would not now have shrunk from contact with his fellow-creatures as he did. But he could not pretend to be other than he was. During the period of his danger, when men had thought that he would be hung,—and when he himself had believed that it would be so,—he had borne himself bravely without any conscious effort. When he had confronted the whole court with that steady courage which had excited Lord Chiltern's admiration, and had looked the bench in the face as though he at least had no cause to quail, he had known nothing of what he was doing. His features had answered the helm from his heart, but had not been played upon by his intellect. And it was so with him now. The reaction had overcome him, and he could not bring himself to pretend that it was not so. The tears would come to his eyes, and he would shiver and shake like one struck by palsy.

Mr. Monk came to him often, and was all but forgiven for the apparent defection in his faith. "I have made up my mind to one thing," Phineas said to him at the end of the ten days.

"And what is the one thing?"

"I will give up my seat."

"I do not see a shadow of a reason for it."

"Nevertheless I will do it. Indeed I have already written to Mr. Rattler for the Hundreds. There may

be and probably are men down at Tankerville who still think that I am guilty. There is an offensiveness in murder which degrades a man even by the accusation. I suppose it would n't do for you to move for the new writ."

"Rattler will do it, as a matter of course. No doubt there will be expressions of great regret, and my belief is that they will return you again."

"If so, they 'll have to do it without my presence."

Mr. Rattler did move for a new writ for the borough of Tankerville, and within a fortnight of his restoration to liberty Phineas Finn was no longer a member of Parliament. It cannot be alleged that there was any reason for what he did, and yet the doing of it for the time rather increased than diminished his popularity. Both Mr. Gresham and Mr. Daubeny expressed their regret in the House, and Mr. Monk said a few words respecting his friend which were very touching. He ended by expressing a hope that they soon might see him there again, and an opinion that he was a man peculiarly fitted by the tone of his mind, and the nature of his intellect, for the duties of Parliament.

Then at last, when all this had been settled, he went to Lord Brentford's house in Portman Square. He had promised that that should be the first house he would visit, and he was as good as his word. One evening he crept out, and walked slowly along Oxford Street, and knocked timidly at the door. As he did so he longed to be told that Lady Laura was not at home. But Lady Laura was at home,—as a matter of course. In those days she never went into society, and had not passed an evening away from her father's house since Mr. Kennedy's death. He was shown up

into the drawing-room in which she sat, and there he found her—alone. "Oh, Phineas, I am so glad you have come."

"I have done as I said, you see."

"I could not go to you when they told me that you were ill. You will have understood all that?"

"Yes; I understand."

"People are so hard, and cold, and stiff, and cruel, that one can never do what one feels, one's self, to be right. So you have given up your seat."

"Yes,—I am no longer a member of Parliament."

"Barrington says that they will certainly re-elect you."

"We shall see. You may be sure at any rate of this,—that I shall never ask them to do so. Things seem to be so different now from what they did. I don't care for the seat. It all seems to be a bore and a trouble. What does it matter who sits in Parliament? The fight goes on just the same. The same falsehoods are acted. The same mock truths are spoken. The same wrong reasons are given. The same personal motives are at work."

"And yet, of all believers in Parliament, you used to be the most faithful."

"One has time to think of things, Lady Laura, when one lies in Newgate. It seems to me to be an eternity of time since they locked me up. And as for that trial, which they tell me lasted a week, I look back at it till the beginning is so distant that I can hardly remember it. But I have resolved that I will never talk of it again. Lady Chiltern is out, probably."

"Yes;—she and Oswald are dining with the Baldocks."

"She is well?"

"Yes;—and most anxious to see you. Will you go to their place in September?"

He had almost made up his mind that if he went anywhere in September he would go to Matching Priory, accepting the offer of the Duchess of Omnium; but he did not dare to say so to Lady Laura, because she would have known that Madame Goesler also would be there. And he had not as yet accepted the invitation, and was still in doubt whether he would not escape by himself instead of attempting to return into the grooves of society. "I think not;—I am hardly as yet sufficiently master of myself to know what I shall do."

"They will be much disappointed."

"And you;—what will you do?"

"I shall not go there. I am told that I ought to visit Loughlinter, and I suppose I shall. Oswald has promised to go down with me before the end of the month, but he will not remain above a day or two."

"And your father?"

"We shall leave him at Saulsby. I cannot look it all in the face yet. It is not possible that I should remain all alone in that great house. The people all around would hate and despise me. I think Violet will come down with me, but of course she cannot remain there. Oswald must go to Harrington because of the hunting. It has become the business of his life. And she must go with him."

"You will return to Saulsby."

"I cannot say. They seem to think that I should live at Loughlinter;—but I cannot live there alone."

He soon took his leave of her, and did so with no

warmer expressions of regard on either side than have here been given. Then he crept back to his lodgings, and she sat weeping alone in her father's house. When he had come to her during her husband's lifetime at Dresden, or even when she had visited him at his prison, it had been better than this.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DUKE'S FIRST COUSIN.

Our pages have lately been taken up almost exclusively with the troubles of Phineas Finn, and indeed have so far not unfairly represented the feelings and interest of people generally at the time. Not to have talked of Phineas Finn from the middle of May to the middle of July in that year would have exhibited great ignorance or a cynical disposition. But other things went on also. Moons waxed and waned; children were born; marriages were contracted; and the hopes and fears of the little world around did not come to an end because Phineas Finn was not to be hung. Among others who had interests of their own there was poor Adelaide Palliser, who we last saw under the affliction of Mr. Spooner's love,—but who before that had encountered the much deeper affliction of a quarrel with her own lover. She had desired him to free her,—and he had gone. Indeed, as to his going at that moment there had been no alternative, as he considered himself to have been turned out of Lord Chiltern's house. The red-headed lord, in the fierceness of his defence of Miss Palliser, had told the lover that under such and such circumstances he could not be allowed to remain at Harrington Hall. Lord Chiltern had said something about "his roof." Now, when a host questions the propriety of a guest remaining under his roof, the guest is obliged to go. Gerard Maule had gone; and, hav-

ing offended his sweetheart by a most impolite allusion to Boulogne, had been forced to go as a rejected lover. From that day to this he had done nothing,—not because he was contented with the lot assigned to him, for every morning, as he lay on his bed, which he usually did till twelve, he swore to himself that nothing should separate him from Adelaide Palliser,—but simply because to do nothing was customary with him. "What is a man to do?" he not unnaturally asked his friend Captain Boodle at the club. "Let her out on the grass for a couple of months," said Captain Boodle, "and she 'll come up as clean as a whistle. When they get these humours there 's nothing like giving them a run." Captain Boodle undoubtedly had the reputation of being very great in council on such matters; but it must not be supposed that Gerard Maule was contented to take his advice implicitly. He was unhappy, ill at ease, half conscious that he ought to do something, full of regrets,—but very idle.

In the meantime Miss Palliser, who had the finer nature of the two, suffered grievously. The Spooner affair was but a small addition to her misfortune. She could get rid of Mr. Spooner,—of any number of Mr. Spooners; but how should she get back to her the man she loved? When young ladies quarrel with their lovers it is always presumed, especially in books, that they do not wish to get them back. It is to be understood that the loss to them is as nothing. Miss Smith begs that Mr. Jones may be assured that he is not to consider her at all. If he is pleased to separate, she will be at any rate quite as well pleased,—probably a great deal better. No doubt she had loved him with all her heart, but that will make no difference to her,

if he wishes,—to be off. Upon the whole Miss Smith thinks that she would prefer such an arrangement, in spite of her heart. Adelaide Palliser had said something of the kind. As Gerard Maule had regarded her as a "trouble," and had lamented that prospect of "Boulogne" which marriage had presented to his eyes, she had dismissed him with a few easily spoken words. She had assured him that no such troubles need weigh upon him. No doubt they had been engaged;—but, as far as she was concerned, the remembrance of that need not embarrass him. And so she and Lord Chiltern between them had sent him away. But how was she to get him back again?

When she came to think it over, she acknowledged to herself that it would be all the world to her to have him back. To have him at all had been all the world to her. There had been nothing peculiarly heroic about him, nor had she ever regarded him as a hero. She had known his faults and weaknesses, and was probably aware that he was inferior to herself in character and intellect. But, nevertheless, she had loved him. To her he had been, though not heroic, sufficiently a man to win her heart. He was a gentleman, pleasant-mannered, pleasant to look at, pleasant to talk to, not educated in the high sense of the word, but never making himself ridiculous by ignorance. He was the very antipodes of a Spooner, and he was,—or rather had been,—her lover. She did not wish to change. She did not recognise the possibility of changing. Though she had told him that he might go if he pleased, to her his going would be the loss of everything. What would life be without a lover,—without the prospect of marriage? And there could

be no other lover. There could be no further prospect should he take her at her word.

Of all this Lord Chiltern understood nothing, but Lady Chiltern understood it all. To his thinking the young man had behaved so badly that it was incumbent on them all to send him away and so have done with him. If the young man wanted to quarrel with any one, there was he to be quarrelled with. The thing was a trouble, and the sooner they got to the end of it the better. But Lady Chiltern understood more than that. She could not prevent the quarrel as it came, —or was coming; but she knew that "the quarrel of lovers is the renewal of love." At any rate, the woman always desires that it may be so, and endeavours to reconcile the parted ones. "You 'll see him in London," Lady Chiltern had said to her friend.

"I do not want to see him," said Adelaide proudly.

"But he 'll want to see you, and then,—after a time, —you 'll want to see him. I don't believe in quarrels, you know."

"It is better that we should part, Lady Chiltern, if marrying will cause him—dismay. I begin to feel that we are too poor to be married."

"A great deal poorer people than you are married every day. Of course people can't be equally rich. You 'll do very well if you 'll only be patient, and not refuse to speak to him when he comes to you." This was said at Harrington after Lady Chiltern had returned from her first journey up to London. That visit had been very short, and Miss Palliser had been left alone at the Hall. We already know how Mr. Spooner took advantage of her solitude. After that, Miss Palliser was to accompany the Chilterns to London, and she

was there with them when Phineas Finn was acquitted. By that time she had brought herself to acknowledge to her friend Lady Chiltern that it would perhaps be desirable that Mr. Maule should return. If he did not do so and that at once, there must come an end to her life in England. She must go away to Italy,—altogether beyond the reach of Gerard Maule. In such case, all the world would have collapsed for her, and she would become the martyr of a shipwreck. And yet the more that she confessed to herself that she loved the man so well that she could not part with him, the more angry she was with him for having told her that, when married, they must live at Boulogne.

The house in Portman Square had been practically given up by Lord Brentford to his son; but nevertheless the old Earl and Lady Laura had returned to it when they reached England from Dresden. It was, however, large, and now the two families,—if the Earl and his daughter can be called a family,—were lodging there together. The Earl troubled them but little, living mostly in his own rooms, and Lady Laura never went out with them. But there was something in the presence of the old man and the widow which prevented the house from being gay as it might have been. There were no parties in Portman Square. Now and then a few old friends dined there; but at the present moment Gerard Maule could not be admitted as an old friend. When Adelaide had been a fortnight in London she had not as yet seen Gerard Maule or heard a word from him. She had been to balls and concerts, to dinner-parties and the play; but no one had as yet brought them together. She did know that he was in town. She was able to obtain so much information of

him as that. But he never came to Portman Square, and had evidently concluded that the quarrel—was to be a quarrel.

Among other balls in London that July there had been one at the Duchess of Omnium's. This had been given after the acquittal of Phineas Finn, though fixed before that great era. "Nothing on earth should have made me have it while he was in prison," the Duchess had said. But Phineas was acquitted, and cakes and ale again became permissible. The ball had been given, and had been very grand. Phineas had been asked, but of course had not gone. Madame Goesler, who was a great heroine since her successful return from Prague, had shown herself there for a few minutes. Lady Chiltern had gone, and of course taken Adelaide. "We are first cousins," the Duke said to Miss Palliser, —for the Duke did steal a moment from his work in which to walk through his wife's drawing-room. Adelaide smiled and nodded, and looked pleased as she gave her hand to her great relative. "I hope we shall see more of each other than we have done," said the Duke. "We have all been sadly divided, have n't we?" Then he said a word to his wife, expressing his opinion that Adelaide Palliser was a nice girl, and asking her to be civil to so near a relative.

The Duchess had heard all about Gerard Maule and the engagement. She always did hear all about everything. And on this evening she asked a question or two from Lady Chiltern. "Do you know," she said, "I have an appointment to-morrow with your husband?"

"I did not know;—but I won't interfere to prevent it, now you are generous enough to tell me."

"I wish you would, because I don't know what to say to him. He is to come about that horrid wood, where the foxes won't get themselves born and bred as foxes ought to do. How can I help it? I 'd send down a whole lying-in hospital for the foxes if I thought that would do any good."

"Lord Chiltern thinks it 's the shooting."

"But where is a person to shoot if he may n't shoot in his own woods? Not that the Duke cares about the shooting for himself. He could not hit a pheasant sitting on a haystack, and would n't know one if he saw it. And he 'd rather that there was n't such a thing as a pheasant in the world. He cares for nothing but farthings. But what is a man to do,—or rather what is a woman to do,—for he tells me that I must settle it."

"Lord Chiltern says that Mr. Fothergill has the foxes destroyed. I suppose Mr. Fothergill may do as he pleases if the Duke gives him permission."

"I hate Mr. Fothergill, if that 'll do any good," said the Duchess; "and we wish we could get rid of him altogether. But that, you know, is impossible. When one has an old man on one's shoulders one never can get rid of him. He is my incubus; and then you see Trumpeton Wood is such a long way from us at Matching that I can't say I want the shooting for myself. And I never go to Gatherum if I can help it. Suppose we made out that the Duke wanted to let the shooting?"

"Lord Chiltern would take it at once."

"But the Duke really would n't let it, you know. I 'll lie awake at night and think about it. And now tell me about Adelaide Palliser. Is she to be married?"

"I hope so,—sooner or later."

"There 's a quarrel or something;—is n't there? She 's the Duke's first cousin, and we should be so sorry that things should n't go pleasantly with her. And she 's a very good-looking girl, too. Would she like to come down to Matching?"

"She has some idea of going back to Italy."

"And leaving her lover behind her! Oh dear, that will be very bad. She 'd much better come to Matching, and then I 'd ask the man to come too. Mr. Maud, is n't he?"

"Gerard Maule."

"Ah, yes; Maule. If it 's the kind of thing that ought to be, I 'd manage it in a week. If you get a young man down into a country house, and there has been anything at all between them, I don't see how he is to escape. Is n't there some trouble about money?"

"They would n't be very rich, Duchess."

"What a blessing for them! But then, perhaps, they 'd be very poor."

"They would be rather poor."

"Which is not a blessing. Is n't there some proverb about going safely in the middle? I 'm sure it 's true about money,—only perhaps you ought to be put a little beyond the middle. I don't know why Plantagenet should n't do something for her."

As to this conversation, Lady Chiltern said very little to Adelaide, but she did mention the proposed visit to Matching.

"The Duchess said nothing to me," replied Adelaide proudly.

"No; I don't suppose she had time. And then she

is so very odd; sometimes taking no notice of one, and at others so very loving."

"I hate that."

"But with her it is neither impudence nor affectation. She says exactly what she thinks at the time, and she is always as good as her word. There are worse women than the Duchess."

"I am sure I should n't like going to Matching," said Adelaide.

Lady Chiltern was right in saying that the Duchess of Omnium was always as good as her word. On the next day, after that interview with Lord Chiltern about Mr. Fothergill and the foxes,—as to which no present further allusion need be made here,—she went to work and did learn a good deal about Gerard Maule and Miss Palliser. Something she learned from Lord Chiltern,—without any consciousness on his lordship's part, something from Madame Goesler, and something from the Baldock people. Before she went to bed on the second night she knew all about the quarrel, and all about the money. "Plantagenet," she said the next morning, "what are you going to do about the Duke's legacy to Marie Goesler?"

"I can do nothing. She must take the things, of course."

"She won't."

"Then the jewels must remain packed up. I suppose they 'll be sold at last for the legacy duty, and, when that 's paid, the balance will belong to her."

"But about the money?"

"Of course it belongs to her."

"Could n't you give it to that girl who was here last night?"

"Give it to a girl!"

"Yes;—to your cousin. She 's as poor as Job, and can't get married because she has n't got any money. It 's quite true; and I must say that if the Duke had looked after his own relations instead of leaving money to people who don't want it and won't have it, it would have been much better. Why should n't Adelaide Palliser have it?"

"How on earth should I give Adelaide Palliser what does n't belong to me? If you choose to make her a present, you can, but such a sum as that would, I should say, be out of the question."

The Duchess had achieved quite as much as she had anticipated. She knew her husband well, and was aware that she could n't carry her point at once. To her mind it was "all nonsense" his saying that the money was not his. If Madame Goesler would n't take it, it must be his; and nobody could make a woman take money if she did not choose. Adelaide Palliser was the Duke's first cousin, and it was intolerable that the Duke's first cousin should be unable to marry because she would have nothing to live upon. It became, at least, intolerable as soon as the Duchess had taken it into her head to like the first cousin. No doubt there were other first cousins as badly off, or perhaps worse, as to whom the Duchess would care nothing whether they were rich or poor,—married or single; but then they were first cousins who had not had the advantage of interesting the Duchess.

"My dear," said the Duchess to her friend, Madame Goesler, "you know all about those Maules?"

"What makes you ask?"

"But you do?"

"I know something about one of them," said Madame Goesler. Now, as it happened, Mr. Maule, senior, had on that very day asked Madame Goesler to share her lot with his, and the request had been—almost indignantly refused. The general theory that the wooing of widows should be quick had, perhaps, misled Mr. Maule. Perhaps he did not think that the wooing had been quick. He had visited Park Lane with the object of making his little proposition once before, and had then been stopped in his course by the consternation occasioned by the arrest of Phineas Finn. He had waited till Phineas had been acquitted, and had then resolved to try his luck. He had heard of the lady's journey to Prague, and was acquainted of course with those rumours which too freely connected the name of our hero with that of the lady. But rumours are often false, and a lady may go to Prague on a gentleman's behalf without intending to marry him. All the women in London were at present more or less in love with the man who had been accused of murder, and the fantasy of Madame Goesler might be only as the fantasy of others. And then, rumour also said that Phineas Finn intended to marry Lady Laura Standish. At any rate a man cannot have his head broken for asking a lady to marry him,—unless he is very awkward in the doing of it. So Mr. Maule made his little proposition.

"Mr. Maule," said Madame, smiling, "is not this rather sudden?" Mr. Maule admitted that it was sudden, but still persisted. "I think, if you please, Mr. Maule, we will say no more about it," said the lady, with that wicked smile still on her face. Mr. Maule declared that silence on the subject had become im-

possible to him. "Then, Mr. Maule, I shall have to leave you to speak to the chairs and tables," said Madame Goesler. No doubt she was used to the thing, and knew how to conduct herself well. He also had been refused before by ladies of wealth, but had never been treated with so little consideration. She had risen from her chair as though about to leave the room, but was slow in her movement, showing him that she thought it was well for him to leave it instead of her. Muttering some words, half of apology and half of self-assertion, she did leave the room; and now she told the Duchess that she knew something of one of the Maules.

"That is, the father?"

"Yes,—the father."

"He is one of your tribe, I know. We met him at your house just before the murder. I don't much admire your taste, my dear, because he 's a hundred and fifty years old;—and what there is of him comes chiefly from the tailor."

"He 's as good as any other old man."

"I dare say,—and I hope Mr. Finn will like his society. But he has got a son."

"So he tells me."

"Who is a charming young man."

"He never told me that, Duchess."

"I dare say not. Men of that sort are always jealous of their sons. But he has. Now I am going to tell you something and ask you to do something."

"What was it the French Minister said. If it is simply difficult it is done. If it is impossible, it shall be done."

"The easiest thing in the world. You saw Plantagenet's first cousin the other night,—Adelaide Palli-

ser. She is engaged to marry young Mr. Maule, and they neither of them have a shilling in the world. I want you to give them five-and-twenty thousand pounds."

"Would n't that be peculiar?"

"Not in the least."

"At any rate it would be inconvenient."

"No it would n't, my dear. It would be the most convenient thing in the world. Of course I don't mean out of your pocket. There 's the Duke's legacy."

"It is n't mine, and never will be."

"But Plantagenet says it never can be anybody else's. If I can get him to agree, will you? Of course there will be ever so many papers to be signed; and the biggest of all robbers, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, will put his fingers into the pudding and pull out a plum, and the lawyers will take more plums. But that will be nothing to us. The pudding will be very nice for them, let ever so many plums be taken. The lawyers and people will do it all, and then it will be her fortune, just as though her uncle had left it to her. As it is now, the money will never be of any use to anybody." Madame Goesler said that if the Duke consented she also would consent. It was immaterial to her who had the money. If by signing any receipt she could facilitate the return of the money to any one of the Duke's family, she would willingly sign it. But Miss Palliser must be made to understand that the money did not come to her as a present from Madame Goesler.

"But it will be a present from Madame Goesler," said the Duke.

"Plantagenet, if you go and upset everything by

saying that, I shall think it most ill-natured. Bother about true! Somebody must have the money. There 's nothing illegal about it." And the Duchess had her own way. Lawyers were consulted, and documents were prepared, and the whole thing was arranged. Only Adelaide Palliser knew nothing about it, nor did Gerard Maule; and the quarrels of lovers had not yet become the renewal of love. Then the Duchess wrote the two following notes:—

"My dear Adelaide,—We shall hope to see you at Matching on the 15th of August. The Duke, as head of the family, expects implicit obedience. You 'll meet fifteen young gentlemen from the Treasury and the Board of Trade, but they won't incommode you, as they are kept at work all day. We hope Mr. Finn will be with us, and there is n't a lady in England who would n't give her eyes to meet him. We shall stay ever so many weeks at Matching, so that you can do as you please as to the time of leaving us.

"Yours affectionately,

"G. O.

"Tell Lord Chiltern that I have my hopes of making Trumpeton Wood too hot for Mr. Fothergill,—but I have to act with the greatest caution. In the meantime, I am sending down dozens of young foxes, all labelled Trumpeton Wood, so that he shall know them."

The other was a card rather than a note. The Duke and Duchess of Omnium presented their compliments to Mr. Gerard Maule, and requested the honour of his company to dinner on,—a certain day named. When

Gerard Maule received this card at his club he was rather surprised, as he had never made the acquaintance either of the Duke or the Duchess. But the Duke was the first cousin of Adelaide Palliser, and of course he accepted the invitation.

CHAPTER XVII.

"I WILL NOT GO TO LOUGHLINTER."

The end of July came, and it was settled that Lady Laura Kennedy should go to Loughlinter. She had been a widow now for nearly three months, and it was thought right that she should go down and see the house, and the lands, and the dependents whom her husband had left in her charge. It was now three years since she had seen Loughlinter, and when last she had left it, she had made up her mind that she would never place her foot upon the place again. Her wretchedness had all come upon her there. It was there that she had first been subjected to the unendurable tedium of Sabbath-day observances. It was there she had been instructed in the unpalatable duties that had been expected from her. It was there that she had been punished with the doctor from Callender whenever she attempted escape under the plea of a headache. And it was there, standing by the waterfall, the noise of which could be heard from the front door, that Phineas Finn had told her of his love. When she accepted the hand of Robert Kennedy she had known that she had not loved him; but from the moment in which Phineas had spoken to her, she knew well that her heart had gone one way, whereas her hand was to go another. From that moment her whole life had quickly become a blank. She had had no period of married happiness, not a month, not an hour. From the mo-

ment in which the thing had been done she had found that the man to whom she had bound herself was odious to her, and that the life before her was distasteful to her. Things which before had seemed worthy to her, and full at any rate of interest, became at once dull and vapid. Her husband was in Parliament, as also had been her father, and many of her friends,—and, by weight of his own character and her influence, was himself placed high in office; but in his house politics lost all the flavour which they had possessed for her in Portman Square. She had thought that she could at any rate do her duty as the mistress of a great household, and as the benevolent lady of a great estate; but household duties under the tutelage of Mr. Kennedy had been impossible to her, and that part of a Scotch Lady Bountiful which she had intended to play seemed to be denied to her. The whole structure had fallen to the ground, and nothing had been left to her.

But she would not sin. Though she could not bring herself to love her husband, she would at any rate be strong enough to get rid of that other love. Having so resolved, she became as weak as water. She at one time determined to be the guiding genius of the man she loved,—a sort of devoted elder sister, intending him to be the intimate friend of her husband; then she had told him not to come to her house, and had been weak enough to let him know why it was that she could not bear his presence. She had failed altogether to keep her secret, and her life during the struggle had become so intolerable to her that she had found herself compelled to desert her husband. He had shown her that he, too, had discovered the truth, and then she had become indignant, and had left him. Every place

that she had inhabited with him had become disagreeable to her. The house in London had been so odious, that she had asked her intimate friends to come to her in that occupied by her father. But of all spots upon earth, Loughlinter had been the most distasteful to her. It was there that the sermons had been the longest, the lessons in accounts the most obstinate, the lectures the most persevering, the dulness the most heavy. It was there that her ears had learned the sound of the wheels of Dr. Macnuthrie's gig. It was there that her spirit had been nearly broken. It was there that, with spirit not broken, she had determined to face all that the world might say of her, and fly from a tyranny which was insupportable. And now the place was her own, and she was told that she must go there as its owner; —go there and be potential, and beneficent, and grandly bland with persons, all of whom knew what had been the relations between her and her husband.

And though she had been indignant with her husband when at last she had left him,—throwing it in his teeth as an unmanly offence that he had accused her of the truth; though she had felt him to be a tyrant and herself to be a thrall; though the sermons, and the lessons, and the doctor had each, severally, seemed to her to be horrible cruelties; yet she had known through it all that the fault had been hers, and not his. He only did that which she should have expected when she married him;—but she had done none of that which he was entitled to expect from her. The real fault, the deceit, the fraud,—the sin had been with her,—and she knew it. Her life had been destroyed,—but not by him. His life had also been destroyed, and she had done it. Now he was gone, and she knew that his

people,—the old mother who was still left alone, his cousins, and the tenants who were now to be her tenants, all said that had she done her duty by him he would still have been alive. And they must hate her the worse, because she had never sinned after such a fashion as to liberate him from his bond to her. With a husband's perfect faith in his wife, he had, immediately after his marriage, given to her for her life the lordship over his people, should he be without a child and should she survive him. In his hottest anger he had not altered that. His constant demand had been that she should come back to him, and be his real wife. And while making that demand,—with a persistency which had driven him mad,—he had died; and now the place was hers, and they told her that she must go and live there!

It is a very sad thing for any human being to have to say to himself,—with an earnest belief in his own assertion,—that all the joy of this world is over for him; and is the sadder because such conviction is apt to exclude the hope of other joy. This woman had said so to herself very often during the last two years, and had certainly been sincere. What was there in store for her? She was banished from the society of all those she liked. She bore a name that was hateful to her. She loved a man whom she could never see. She was troubled about money. Nothing in life had any taste for her. All the joys of the world were over, —and had been lost by her own fault. Then Phineas Finn had come to her at Dresden, and now her husband was dead!

Could it be that she was entitled to hope that the sun might rise again for her once more and another day

be reopened for her with a gorgeous morning. She was now rich and still young,—or young enough. She was two and thirty, and had known many women,—women still honoured with the name of girls,—who had commenced the world successfully at that age. And this man had loved her once. He had told her so, and had afterwards kissed her when informed of her own engagement. How well she remembered it all. He too had gone through vicissitudes in life, had married and retired out of the world, had returned to it, and had gone through fire and water. But now everybody was saying good things of him, and all he wanted was the splendour which wealth would give him. Why should he not take it at her hands, and why should not the world begin again for both of them?

But though she would dream that it might be so, she was quite sure that there was no such life in store for her. The nature of the man was too well known to her. Fickle he might be;—or rather capable of change than fickle; but he was incapable of pretending to love when he did not love. She felt that in all the moments in which he had been most tender with her. When she had endeavoured to explain to him the state of her feelings at Königstein,—meaning to be true in what she said, but not having been even then true throughout,—she had acknowledged to herself that at every word he spoke she was wounded by his coldness. Had he then professed a passion for her she would have rebuked him, and told him that he must go from her,—but it would have warmed the blood in all her veins, and brought back to her a sense of youthful life. It had been the same when she visited him in the prison;—the same again when he came to

her after his acquittal. She had been frank enough to him, but he would not even pretend that he loved her. His gratitude, his friendship, his services, were all hers. In every respect he had behaved well to her. All his troubles had come upon him because he would not desert her cause,—but he would never again say he loved her.

She gazed at herself in the glass, putting aside for the moment the hideous widow's cap which she now wore, and told herself that it was natural that it should be so. Though she was young in years, her features were hard and worn with care. She had never thought herself to be a beauty, though she had been conscious of a certain aristocratic grace of manner which might stand in the place of beauty. As she examined herself she found that that was not all gone;—but she now lacked that roundness of youth which had been hers when first she knew Phineas Finn. She sat opposite the mirror, and pored over her own features with an almost skilful scrutiny, and told herself at last aloud that she had become an old woman. He was in the prime of life; but for her was left nothing but its dregs.

She was to go to Loughlinter with her brother and her brother's wife, leaving her father at Saulsby on the way. The Chilterns were to remain with her for one week, and no more. His presence was demanded in the Brake country, and it was with difficulty that he had been induced to give her so much of his time. But what was she to do when they should leave her? How could she live alone in that great house, thinking, as she ever must think, of all that had happened to her there? It seemed to her that everybody near to her was cruel in demanding from her such a sacrifice of

her comfort. Her father had shuddered when she had proposed to him to accompany her to Loughlinter; but her father was one of those who insisted on the propriety of her going there. Then in spite of that lesson which she had taught herself while sitting opposite to the glass, she allowed her fancy to revel in the idea of having him with her as she wandered over the braes. She saw him a day or two before her journey, when she told him her plans as she might tell them to any friend. Lady Chiltern and her father had been present, and there had been no special sign in her outward manner of the mingled tenderness and soreness of her heart within. No allusion had been made to any visit from him to the North. She would not have dared to suggest it in the presence of her brother, and was almost as much cowed by her brother's wife. But when she was alone, on the eve of her departure, she wrote to him as follows:—

"Sunday, 1st August—

"Dear Friend,—I thought that perhaps you might have come in this afternoon, and I have not left the house all day. I was so wretched that I could not go to church in the morning;—and when the afternoon came, I preferred the chance of seeing you to going out with Violet. We two were alone all the evening, and I did not give you up till nearly ten. I dare say you were right not to come. I should only have bored you with my complaints, and have grumbled to you of evils which you cannot cure.

"We start at nine to-morrow, and get to Saulsby in the afternoon. Such a family party as we shall be! I did fancy that Oswald would escape it; but, like everybody else, he has changed,—and has become domestic

and dutiful. Not but that he is as tyrannous as ever; but his tyranny is now that of the responsible father of a family. Papa cannot understand him at all, and is dreadfully afraid of him. We stay two nights at Saulsby, and then go on to Scotland, leaving papa at home.

"Of course it is very good in Violet and Oswald to come with me,—if, as they say, it be necessary for me to go at all. As to living there by myself, it seems to me to be impossible. You know the place well, and can you imagine me there all alone, surrounded by Scotch men and women, who, of course, must hate and despise me, afraid of every face that I see, and reminded even by the chairs and tables of all that is past? I have told papa that I know I shall be back at Saulsby before the middle of the month. He frets and says nothing; but he tells Violet, and then she lectures me in that wise way of hers which enables her to say such hard things with so much seeming tenderness. She asks me why I do not take a companion with me, as I am so much afraid of solitude. Where on earth should I find a companion who would not be worse than solitude? I do feel now that I have mistaken life in having so little used myself to the small resources of feminine companionship. I love Violet dearly, and I used to be always happy in her society. But even with her now I feel but a half sympathy. That girl that she has with her is more to her than I am, because after the first half-hour I grow tired about her babies. I have never known any other woman with whom I cared to be alone. How then shall I content myself with a companion, hired by the quarter, perhaps from some advertisement in a newspaper?

"No companionship of any kind seems possible to

me,—and yet never was a human being more weary of herself. I sometimes wonder whether I could go again and sit in that cage in the House of Commons to hear you and other men speak,—as I used to do. I do not believe that any eloquence in the world would make it endurable to me. I hardly care who is in or out, and do not understand the things which my cousin Barrington tells me,—so long does it seem since I was in the midst of them all. Not but that I am intensely anxious that you should be back. They tell me that you will certainly be re-elected this week, and that all the House will receive you with open arms. I should have liked, had it been possible, to be once more in the cage to see that. But I am such a coward that I did not even dare to propose to stay for it. Violet would have told me that such manifestation of interest was unfit for my condition as a widow. But in truth, Phineas, there is nothing else now that does interest me. If, looking on from a distance, I can see you succeed, I shall try once more to care for the questions of the day. When you have succeeded, as I know you will, it will be some consolation to me to think that I also helped a little.

"I suppose I must not ask you to come to Loughlinter? But you will know best. If you will do so I shall care nothing for what any one may say. Oswald hardly mentions your name in my hearing, and of course I know of what he is thinking. When I am with him I am afraid of him, because it would add infinitely to my grief were I driven to quarrel with him; but I am my own mistress as much as he is his own master, and I will not regulate my conduct by his wishes. If you please to come, you will be welcome

as the flowers in May. Ah, how weak are such words in giving any idea of the joy with which I should see you!

"God bless you, Phineas.

"Your most affectionate friend,

"LAURA KENNEDY.

"Write to me at Loughlinter. I shall long to hear that you have taken your seat immediately on your re-election. Pray do not lose a day. I am sure that all your friends will advise you as I do."

Throughout her whole letter she was struggling to tell him once again of her love, and yet to do it in some way of which she need not be ashamed. It was not till she had come to the last words that she could force her pen to speak of her affection, and then the words did not come freely as she would have had them. She knew that he would not come to Loughlinter. She felt that were he to do so he could come only as a suitor for her hand, and that such a suit, in these early days of her widowhood, carried on in her late husband's house, would be held to be disgraceful. As regarded herself, she would have faced all that for the sake of the thing to be attained. But she knew that he would not come. He had become wise by experience, and would perceive the result of such coming,—and would avoid it. His answer to her letter reached Loughlinter before she did:—

"Great Marlborough St.,

"Monday night.

"Dear Lady Laura,—I should have called in the Square last night, only that I feel that Lady Chiltern

must be weary of the woes of so doleful a person as myself. I dined and spent the evening with the Lows, and was quite aware that I disgraced myself with them by being perpetually lachrymose. As a rule I do not think that I am more given than other people to talk of myself, but I am conscious of a certain incapability of getting rid of myself that has grown upon me since those weary weeks in Newgate and those frightful days in the dock; and this makes me unfit for society. Should I again have a seat in the House I should be afraid to get upon my legs, lest I should find myself talking of the time in which I stood before the judge with a halter round my neck.

"I sympathise with you perfectly in what you say about Loughlinter. It may be right that you should go there and show yourself,—so that those who knew the Kennedys in Scotland should not say that you had not dared to visit the place, but I do not think it possible that you should live there as yet. And why should you do so? I cannot conceive that your presence there should do good, unless you took delight in the place.

"I will not go to Loughlinter myself, although I know how warm would be my welcome." (When he had got so far with his letter he found the difficulty of going on with it to be almost insuperable. How could he give her any reasons for his not making the journey to Scotland?) "People would say that you and I should not be alone together after all the evil that has been spoken of us;—and would be specially eager in saying so were I now to visit you, so lately made a widow, and to sojourn with you in the house that did belong to your husband. Only think how eloquent would be

the indignation of the People's Banner were it known that I was at Loughlinter." (Could he have spoken the truth openly, such were the reasons that he would have given; but it was impossible that such truths should be written by him in a letter to herself. And then it was almost equally difficult for him to tell her of a visit which he had resolved to make. But the letter must be completed, and at last the words were written.) "I could be of no real service to you there, as will be your brother and your brother's wife, even though their stay with you is to be so short. Were I you I would go out among the people as much as possible, even though they should not receive you cordially at first. Though we hear so much of clanship in the Highlands, I think the Highlanders are prone to cling to any one who has territorial authority among them. They thought a great deal of Mr. Kennedy, but they had never heard his name fifty years ago. I suppose you will return to Saulsby soon, and then perhaps I may be able to see you.

"In the meantime I am going to Matching." (This difficulty was worse even than the other.) "Both the Duke and the Duchess have asked me, and I know that I am bound to make an effort to face my fellow-creatures again. The horror I feel at being stared at, as the man that was not—hung as a murderer, is stronger than I can describe; and I am well aware that I shall be talked to and made a wonder of on that ground. I am told that I am to be re-elected triumphantly at Tankerville without a penny of cost or the trouble of asking for a vote, simply because I did n't knock poor Mr. Bonteen on the head. This to me is abominable, but I cannot help myself, unless I resolve

to go away and hide myself. That I know cannot be right, and therefore I had better go through it, and have done with it. Though I am to be stared at, I shall not be stared at very long. Some other monster will come up and take my place, and I shall be the only person who will not forget it all. Therefore I have accepted the Duke's invitation, and shall go to Matching some time in the end of August. All the world is to be there.

"This re-election,—and I believe I shall be re-elected to-morrow,—would be altogether distasteful to me were it not that I feel that I should not allow myself to be cut to pieces by what has occurred. I shall hate to go back to the House, and have somehow learned to dislike and distrust all those things that used to be so fine and lively to me. I don't think that I believe any more in the party;—or rather in the men who lead it. I used to have a faith that now seems to me to be marvellous. Even twelve months ago, when I was beginning to think of standing for Tankerville, I believed that on our side the men were patriotic angels, and that Daubeny and his friends were all fiends or idiots,—mostly idiots, but with a strong dash of fiendism to control them. It has all come now to one common level of poor human interests. I doubt whether patriotism can stand the wear and tear and temptation of the front benches in the House of Commons. Men are flying at each other's throats, thrusting and parrying, making false accusations and defences equally false, lying and slandering,—sometimes picking and stealing,—till they themselves become unaware of the magnificence of their own position, and forget that they are expected to be great. Little tricks of sword-

play engage all their skill. And the consequence is that there is no reverence now for any man in the House,—none of that feeling which we used to entertain for Mr. Mildmay.

"Of course I write—and feel—as a discontented man; and what I say to you I would not say to any other human being. I did long most anxiously for office, having made up my mind a second time to look to it as a profession. But I meant to earn my bread honestly, and give it up,—as I did before, when I could not keep it with a clear conscience. I knew that I was hustled out of the object of my poor ambition by that unfortunate man who has been hurried to his fate. In such a position I ought to distrust, and do partly distrust, my own feelings. And I am aware that I have been soured by prison indignities. But still the conviction remains with me that parliamentary interests are not those battles of gods and giants which I used to regard them. Our Gyes with the hundred hands is but a Three-fingered Jack, and I sometimes think that we share our great Jove with the Strand Theatre. Nevertheless I shall go back,—and if they will make me a joint lord to-morrow, I shall be in heaven!

"I do not know why I should write all this to you except that there is no one else to whom I can say it. There is no one else who would give a moment of time to such lamentations. My friends will expect me to talk to them of my experiences in the dock rather than politics, and will want to know what rations I had in Newgate. I went to call on the Governor only yesterday, and visited the old room. 'I never could really bring myself to think that you did it, Mr. Finn,' he

said. I looked at him and smiled, but I should have liked to fly at his throat. Why did he not know that the charge was a monstrous absurdity? Talking of that, not even you were truer to me than your brother. One expects it from a woman;—both the truth and the discernment.

"I have written to you a cruelly long letter; but when one's mind is full, such relief is sometimes better than talking. Pray answer it before long, and let me know what you intend to do.

"Yours most affectionately,

"PHINEAS FINN."

She did read the letter through,—read it probably more than once; but there was only one sentence in it that had for her any enduring interest. "I will not go to Loughlinter myself." Though she had known that he would not come, her heart sank within her, as though now, at this moment, the really fatal wound had at last been inflicted. But, in truth, there was another sentence as a complement to the first, which rivetted the dagger in her bosom. "In the meantime I am going to Matching." Throughout his letter the name of that woman was not mentioned, but of course she would be there. The thing had all been arranged in order that they two might be brought together. She told herself that she had always hated that intriguing woman, Lady Glencora. She read the remainder of the letter and understood it; but she read it all in connection with the beauty, and the wealth, and the art,—and the cunning of Madame Max Goesler.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PHINEAS FINN IS RE-ELECTED.

THE manner in which Phineas Finn was returned a second time for the borough of Tankerville was memorable among the annals of English elections. When the news reached the town that their member was to be tried for murder no doubt every elector believed that he was guilty. It is the natural assumption when the police and magistrates and lawyers, who have been at work upon the matter carefully, having come to that conclusion, and nothing but private knowledge or personal affection will stand against such evidence. At Tankerville there was nothing of either, and our hero's guilt was taken as a certainty. There was an interest felt in the whole matter which was full of excitement, and not altogether without delight to the Tankervillians. Of course the borough, as a borough, would never again hold up its head. There had never been known such an occurrence in the whole history of this country as the hanging of a member of the House of Commons. And this member of Parliament was to be hung for murdering another member, which, no doubt, added much to the importance of the transaction. A large party in the borough declared that it was a judgment. Tankerville had degraded itself among boroughs by sending a Roman Catholic to Parliament, and had done so at the very moment in which the Church of England was being brought into danger. This was what

had come upon the borough by not sticking to honest Mr. Browborough! There was a moment,—just before the trial was begun,—in which a large proportion of the electors was desirous of proceeding to work at once, and of sending Mr. Browborough back to his own place. It was thought that Phineas Finn should be made to resign. And very wise men in Tankerville were much surprised when they were told that a member of Parliament cannot resign his seat,—that when once returned he is supposed to be, as long as that Parliament shall endure, the absolute slave of his constituency and his country, and that he can escape from his servitude only by accepting some office under the Crown. Now it was held to be impossible that a man charged with murder should be appointed even to the stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds. The House, no doubt, could expel a member, and would, as a matter of course, expel the member for Tankerville,—but the House could hardly proceed to expulsion before the member's guilt could have been absolutely established. So it came to pass that there was no escape for the borough from any part of the disgrace to which it had subjected itself by its unworthy choice, and some Tankervillians of sensitive minds were of opinion that no Tankervillian ever again ought to take part in politics.

Then, quite suddenly, there came into the borough the tidings that Phineas Finn was an innocent man. This happened on the morning on which the three telegrams from Prague reached London. The news conveyed by the telegrams was at Tankerville almost as soon as in the court at the Old Bailey, and was believed as readily. The name of the lady who had

travelled all the way to Bohemia on behalf of their handsome young member was on the tongue of every woman in Tankerville, and a most delightful romance was composed. Some few Protestant spirits regretted the now assured escape of their Roman Catholic enemy, and would not even yet allow themselves to doubt that the whole murder had been arranged by Divine Providence to bring down the scarlet woman. It seemed to them to be so fitting a thing that Providence should interfere directly to punish a town in which the sins of the scarlet woman were not held to be abominable! But the multitude were soon convinced that their member was innocent; and as it was certain that he had been in great peril,—as it was known that he was still in durance, and as it was necessary that the trial should proceed, and that he should still stand at least for another day in the dock,—he became more than ever a hero. Then came the further delay, and at last the triumphant conclusion of the trial. When acquitted, Phineas Finn was still member for Tankerville, and might have walked into the House on that very night. Instead of doing so he had at once asked for the accustomed means of escape from his servitude, and the seat for Tankerville was vacant. The most loving friends of Mr. Browborough perceived at once that there was not a chance for him. The borough was all but unanimous in resolving that it would return no one as its member but the man who had been unjustly accused of murder.

Mr. Ruddles was at once despatched to London with two other political spirits,—so that there might be a real deputation,—and waited upon Phineas two days after his release from prison. Ruddles was very anx-

ous to carry his member back with him, assuring Phineas of an entry into the borough so triumphant that nothing like to it had ever been known at Tankerville. But to all this Phineas was quite deaf. At first he declined even to be put in nomination. "You can't escape from it, Mr. Finn, you can't indeed," said Ruddles. "You don't at all understand the enthusiasm of the borough; does he, Mr. Gadmire?"

"I never knew anything like it in my life before," said Gadmire.

"I believe Mr. Finn would poll two-thirds of the Church party to-morrow," said Mr. Troddles, a leading dissenter in Tankerville, who on this occasion was the third member of the deputation.

"I need n't sit for the borough unless I please, I suppose," pleaded Phineas.

"Well, no;—at least I don't know," said Ruddles. "It would be throwing us over a good deal, and I 'm sure you are not the gentleman to do that. And then, Mr. Finn, don't you see that though you have been knocked about a little lately——"

"By George, he has,—most cruel," said Troddles.

"You 'll miss the House if you give it up; you will, after a bit, Mr. Finn. You 've got to come round again, Mr. Finn,—if I may be so bold as to say so, and you should n't put yourself out of the way of coming round comfortably."

Phineas knew that there was wisdom in the words of Mr. Ruddles, and consented. Though at this moment he was low in heart, disgusted with the world, and sick of humanity,—though every joint in his body was still sore from the rack on which he had been stretched, yet he knew that it would not be so with him always.

As others recovered so would he, and it might be that he would live to "miss the House," should he now refuse the offer made to him. He accepted the offer, but he did so with a positive assurance that no consideration should at present take him to Tankerville.

"We ain't going to charge you, not one penny," said Mr. Gadmire, with enthusiasm.

"I feel all that I owe to the borough," said Phineas, "and to the warm friends there who have espoused my cause; but I am not in a condition at present, either of mind or body, to put myself forward anywhere in public. I have suffered a great deal——"

"Most cruel!" said Troddles.

"And am quite willing to confess that I am therefore unfit in my present position to serve the borough."

"We can't admit that," said Gadmire, raising his left hand.

"We mean to have you," said Troddles.

"There is n't a doubt about your re-election, Mr. Finn," said Ruddles.

"I am very grateful, but I cannot be there. I must trust to one of you gentlemen to explain to the electors that in my present condition I am unable to visit the borough."

Messrs. Ruddles, Gadmire, and Troddles returned to Tankerville,—disappointed no doubt at not bringing with them him whose company would have made their feet glorious on the pavement of their native town,—but still with a comparative sense of their own importance in having seen the great sufferer whose woes forbade that he should be beheld by common eyes. They never even expressed an idea that he ought to have come, alluding even to their past convictions as to the

futility of hoping for such a blessing; but spoke of him as a personage made almost sacred by the sufferings which he had been made to endure. As to the election, that would be a matter of course. He was proposed by Mr. Ruddles himself, and was absolutely seconded by the rector of Tankerville,—the staunchest tory in the place, who on this occasion made a speech in which he declared that as an Englishman, loving justice, he could not allow any political or even any religious consideration to bias his conduct on this occasion. Mr. Finn had thrown up his seat under the pressure of a false accusation, and it was, the rector thought, for the honour of the borough that the seat should be restored to him. So Phineas Finn was re-elected for Tankerville without opposition and without expense; and for six weeks after the ceremony parcels were showered upon him by the ladies of the borough, who sent him worked slippers, scarlet hunting waistcoats, pocket handkerchiefs, with "P. F." beautifully embroidered, and chains made of their own hair.

In this conjunction of affairs, the editor of the People's Banner found it somewhat difficult to trim his sails. It was a rule of life with Mr. Quintus Slide to persecute an enemy. An enemy might at any time become a friend, but while an enemy was an enemy he should be trodden on and persecuted. Mr. Slide had striven more than once to make a friend of Phineas Finn; but Phineas Finn had been conceited and stiff-necked. Phineas had been to Mr. Slide an enemy of enemies, and by all his ideas of manliness, by all the rules of his life, by every principle which guided him, he was bound to persecute Phineas to the last. During the trial and the few weeks before the trial he had

written various short articles with the view of declaring how improper it would be should a newspaper express any opinion of the guilt or innocence of a suspected person while under trial; and he gave two or three severe blows to contemporaries for having sinned in the matter; but in all these articles he had contrived to insinuate that the member for Tankerville, would, as a matter of course, be dealt with by the hands of justice. He had been very careful to recapitulate all circumstances, which had induced Finn to hate the murdered man, and had more than once related the story of the firing of the pistol at Macpherson's Hotel. Then came the telegram from Prague, and for a day or two Mr. Slide was stricken dumb. The acquittal followed, and Quintus Slide had found himself compelled to join in the general satisfaction evinced at the escape of an innocent man. Then came the re-election for Tankerville, and Mr. Slide felt that there was opportunity for another reaction. More than enough had been done for Phineas Finn in allowing him to elude the gallows. There could certainly be no need for crowning him with a political chaplet because he had not murdered Mr. Bonteen. Among a few other remarks which Mr. Slide threw together, the following appeared in the columns of the People's Banner:—

"We must confess that we hardly understand the principle on which Mr. Finn has been re-elected for Tankerville with so much enthusiasm,—free of expense, —and without that usual compliment to the constituency which is implied by the personal appearance of the candidate. We have more than once expressed our belief that he was wrongly accused in the matter of

Mr. Bonteen's murder. Indeed, our readers will do us the justice to remember that, during the trial and before the trial, we were always anxious to allay the very strong feeling against Mr. Finn with which the public mind was then imbued, not only by the facts of the murder, but also by the previous conduct of that gentleman. But we cannot understand why the late member should be thought by the electors of Tankerville to be especially worthy of their confidence because he did not murder Mr. Bonteen. He himself, instigated, we hope, by a proper feeling, retired from Parliament as soon as he was acquitted. His career during the last twelve months has not enhanced his credit, and cannot, we should think, have increased his comfort. We ventured to suggest after that affair in Judd Street, as to which the police were so benignly inefficient, that it would not be for the welfare of the nation that a gentleman should be employed in the public service whose public life had been marked by the misfortune which had attended Mr. Finn. Great efforts were made by various ladies of the old whig party to obtain official employment for him, but they were made in vain. Mr. Gresham was too wise, and our advice,—we will not say was followed,—but was found to agree with the decision of the Prime Minister. Mr. Finn was left out in the cold in spite of his great friends,—and then came the murder of Mr. Bonteen.

"Can it be that Mr. Finn's fitness for parliamentary duties has been increased by Mr. Bonteen's unfortunate death, or by the fact that Mr. Bonteen was murdered by other hands than his own? We think not. The wretched husband, who, in the madness of jealousy, fired a pistol at this young man's head, has since died

in his madness. Does that incident in the drama give Mr. Finn any special claim to consideration? We think not;—and we think also that the electors of Tankerville would have done better had they allowed Mr. Finn to return to that obscurity which he seems to have desired. The electors of Tankerville, however, are responsible only to their borough, and may do as they please with the seat in Parliament which is at their disposal. We may, however, protest against the employment of an unfit person in the service of his country,—simply because he has not committed a murder. We say so much now because rumours of an arrangement have reached our ears, which, should it come to pass,—would force upon us the extremely disagreeable duty of referring very forcibly to past circumstances, which may otherwise, perhaps, be allowed to be forgotten."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE END OF THE STORY OF MR. EMILIUS AND LADY EUSTACE.

The interest in the murder by no means came to an end when Phineas Finn was acquitted. The new facts which served so thoroughly to prove him innocent tended with almost equal weight to prove another man guilty. And the other man was already in custody on a charge which had subjected him to the peculiar ill-will of the British public. He, a foreigner and a Jew, by name Yosef Mealyus,—as every one was now very careful to call him,—had come to England, had got himself to be ordained as a clergyman, had called himself Emilius, and had married a rich wife with a title, although he had a former wife still living in his own country. Had he called himself Jones it would have been better for him, but there was something in the name of Emilius which added a peculiar sting to his iniquities. It was now known that the bigamy could be certainly proved, and that his last victim,—our old friend, poor little Lizzie Eustace,—would be rescued from his clutches. She would once more be a free woman, and as she had been strong enough to defend her future income from his grasp, she was perhaps as fortunate as she deserved to be. She was still young and pretty, and there might come another lover more desirable that Yosef Mealyus. That the man would have to undergo the punishment of bigamy in its severest form there was no doubt;—but would law,

and justice, and the prevailing desire for revenge, be able to get at him in such a way that he might be hung? There certainly did exist a strong desire to prove Mr. Emilius to have been a murderer, so that there might come a fitting termination to his career in Great Britain.

The police seemed to think that they could make but little either of the coat or of the key, unless other evidence, that would be almost sufficient in itself, should be found. Lord Fawn was informed that his testimony would probably be required at another trial, —which intimation affected him so grievously that his friends for a week or two thought that he would altogether sink under his miseries. But he would say nothing which would seem to criminate Mealyus. A man hurrying along with a grey coat was all that he could swear to now,—professing himself to be altogether ignorant whether the man, as seen by him, had been tall or short. And then the manufacture of the key—though it was that which made every one feel sure that Mealyus was the murderer,—did not, in truth, afford the slightest evidence against him. Even had it been proved that he had certainly used the false key and left Mrs. Meager's house on the night in question, that would not have sufficed at all to prove that therefore he had committed a murder in Berkeley Street. No doubt Mr. Bonteen had been his enemy,—and Mr. Bonteen had been murdered by an enemy. But so great had been the man's luck that no real evidence seemed to touch him. Nobody doubted;—but then but few had doubted before as to the guilt of Phineas Finn.

There was one other fact by which the truth might, it was hoped, still be reached. Mr. Bonteen had, of

course, been killed by the weapon which had been found in the garden. As to that a general certainty prevailed. Mrs. Meager and Miss Meager, and the maid-of-all-work belonging to the Meagers, and even Lady Eustace, were examined as to this bludgeon. Had anything of the kind ever been seen in the possession of the clergyman? The clergyman had been so sly that nothing of the kind had been seen. Of the drawers and cupboards which he used, Mrs. Meager had always possessed duplicate keys, and Miss Meager frankly acknowledged that she had a general and fairly accurate acquaintance with the contents of these receptacles; but there had always been a big trunk with an impenetrable lock,—a lock which required that even if you had the key you should be acquainted with a certain combination of letters before you could open it,—and of that trunk no one had seen the inside. As a matter of course, the weapon, when brought to London, had been kept altogether hidden in the trunk. Nothing could be easier. But a man cannot be hung because he has had a secret hiding-place in which a murderous weapon may have been stowed away.

But might it not be possible to trace the weapon? Mealyus, on his return from Prague, had certainly come through Paris. So much was learned,—and it was also learned as a certainty that the article was of French,—and probably of Parisian manufacture. If it could be proved that the man had bought this weapon, or even such a weapon, in Paris, then—so said all the police authorities—it might be worth while to make an attempt to hang him. Men very skilful in unravelling such mysteries were sent to Paris, and the police of that capital entered upon the search with

most praiseworthy zeal. But the number of life-preservers which had been sold altogether baffled them. It seemed that nothing was so common as that gentlemen should walk about with bludgeons in their pockets covered with leathern thongs. A young woman and an old man who thought that they could recollect something of a special sale were brought over,—and saw the splendour of London under very favourable circumstances;—but when confronted with Mr. Emilius, neither could venture to identify him. A large sum of money was expended,—no doubt justified by the high position which poor Mr. Bonteen had filled in the counsels of the nation; but it was expended in vain. Mr. Bonteen had been murdered in the streets at the west end of London. The murderer was known to everybody. He had been seen a minute or two before the murder. The motive which had induced the crime was apparent. The weapon with which it had been perpetrated had been found. The murderer's disguise had been discovered. The cunning with which he had endeavoured to prove that he was in bed at home had been unravelled, and the criminal purpose of his cunning made altogether manifest. Every man's eye could see the whole thing from the moment in which the murderer crept out of Mrs. Meager's house with Mr. Meager's coat upon his shoulders and the life-preserver in his pocket, till he was seen by Lord Fawn hurrying out of the mews to his prey. The blows from the bludgeon could be counted. The very moment in which they had been struck had been ascertained. His very act in hurling the weapon over the wall was all but seen. And yet nothing could be done. "It is a very dangerous thing hanging a man

on circumstantial evidence," said Sir Gregory Grogram, who, a couple of months since, had felt almost sure that his honourable friend Phineas Finn would have to be hung on circumstantial evidence. The police and magistrates and lawyers all agreed that it would be useless, and indeed wrong, to send the case before a jury. But there had been quite sufficient evidence against Phineas Finn!

In the meantime the trial for bigamy proceeded, in order that poor little Lizzie Eustace might be freed from the incubus which afflicted her. Before the end of July she was made once more a free woman, and the Rev. Joseph Emilius,—under which name it was thought proper that he should be tried,—was convicted and sentenced to penal servitude for five years. A very touching appeal was made for him to the jury by a learned serjeant, who declared that his client was to lose his wife and to be punished with extreme severity as a bigamist, because it was found to be impossible to bring home against him a charge of murder. There was, perhaps, some truth in what the learned serjeant said, but the truth had no effect upon the jury. Mr. Emilius was found guilty as quickly as Phineas Finn had been acquitted, and was, perhaps, treated with a severity which the single crime would hardly have elicited. But all this happened in the middle of the efforts which were being made to trace the purchase of the bludgeon, and when men hoped two, or five, or twenty-five years of threatened incarceration might be all the same to Mr. Emilius. Could they have succeeded in discovering where he had bought the weapon, his years of penal servitude would have afflicted him but little. They did not succeed; and though it can-

not be said that any mystery was attached to the Bonteen murder, it has remained one of those crimes which are unavenged by the flagging law. And so the Rev. Mr. Emilius will pass away from our story.

There must be one or two words further respecting poor little Lizzie Eustace. She still had her income almost untouched, having been herself unable to squander it during her late married life, and having succeeded in saving it from the clutches of her pseudo husband. And she had her title, of which no one could rob her, and her castle down in Ayrshire,—which, however, as a place of residence she had learned to hate most thoroughly. Nor had she done anything which of itself must necessarily have put her out of the pale of society. As a married woman she had had no lovers; and, when a widow, very little fault in that line had been brought home against her. But the world at large seemed to be sick of her. Mr. Bonteen had been her best friend, and, while it was still thought that Phineas Finn had committed the murder, with Mrs. Bonteen she had remained. But it was impossible that the arrangement should be continued when it became known, —for it was known,—that Mr. Bonteen had been murdered by the man who was still Lizzie's reputed husband. Not that Lizzie perceived this,—though she was averse to the idea of her husband having been a murderer. But Mrs. Bonteen perceived it, and told her friend that she must—go. It was most unwillingly that the wretched widow changed her faith as to the murderer; but at last she found herself bound to believe as the world believed; and then she hinted to the wife of Mr. Emilius that she had better find another home.

"I don't believe it a bit," said Lizzie.

"It is not a subject I can discuss," said the widow.

"And I don't see that it makes any difference. He is n't my husband. You have said that yourself very often, Mrs. Bonteen."

"It is better that we should n't be together, Lady Eustace."

"Oh, I can go, of course, Mrs. Bonteen. There need n't be the slightest trouble about that. I had thought perhaps it might be convenient; but of course you know best."

She went forth into lodgings into Half Moon Street, close to the scene of the murder, and was once more alone in the world. She had a child indeed, the son of her first husband, as to whom it behoved many to be anxious, who stood high in rank and high in repute; but such had been Lizzie's manner of life that neither her own relations nor those of her husband could put up with her, or endure her contact. And yet she was conscious of no special sins, and regarded herself as one who with a tender heart of her own, and a too-confiding spirit, had been much injured by the cruelty of those with whom she had been thrown. Now she was alone, weeping in solitude, pitying herself with deepest compassion; but it never occurred to her that there was anything in her conduct that she need alter. She would still continue to play her game as before, would still scheme, would still lie; and might still, at last, land herself in that Elysium of life of which she had been always dreaming. Poor Lizzie Eustace! Was it nature or education which had made it impossible to her to tell the truth, when a lie came to her hand? Lizzie, the liar! Poor Lizzie!

CHAPTER XX.

PHINEAS FINN RETURNS TO HIS DUTIES.

The election at Tankerville took place during the last week in July; and as Parliament was doomed to sit that year as late as the 10th of August, there was ample time for Phineas to present himself and take the oaths before the session was finished. He had calculated that this could hardly be so when the matter of re-election was first proposed to him, and had hoped that his reappearance might be deferred till the following year. But there he was, once more member for Tankerville, while yet there was nearly a fortnight's work to be done, pressed by his friends, and told by one or two of those whom he most trusted, that he would neglect his duty and show himself to be a coward, if he abstained from taking his place. "Coward is a hard word," he said to Mr. Low, who had used it.

"So men think when this or that other man is accused of running away in battle or the like. Nobody will charge you with cowardice of that kind. But there is moral cowardice as well as physical."

"As when a man lies. I am telling no lie."

"But you are afraid to meet the eyes of your fellow-creatures."

"Yes, I am. You may call me a coward if you like. What matters the name, if the charge be true! I have been so treated that I am afraid to meet the eyes of my fellow-creatures. I am like a man who has had his knees broken, or his arms cut off. Of course I

cannot be the same afterwards as I was before." Mr. Low said a great deal more to him on the subject, and all that Mr. Low said was true; but he was somewhat rough and did not succeed. Barrington Erle and Lord Cantrip also tried their eloquence upon him; but it was Mr. Monk who at last drew from him a promise that he would go down to the House and be sworn in early on a certain Tuesday afternoon. "I am quite sure of this," Mr. Monk had said, "that the sooner you do it the less will be the annoyance. Indeed there will be no trouble in the doing of it. The trouble is all in the anticipation, and is therefore only increased and prolonged by delay." "Of course it is your duty to go at once," Mr. Monk had said again, when his friend argued that he had never undertaken to sit before the expiration of Parliament. "You did consent to be put in nomination, and you owe your immediate services just as does any other member."

"If a man's grandmother dies he is held to be exempted."

"But your grandmother has not died, and your sorrow is not of the kind that requires or is supposed to require retirement."

He gave way at last, and on the Tuesday afternoon Mr. Monk called for him at Mrs. Bunce's house, and went down with him to Westminster. They reached their destination somewhat too soon, and walked the length of Westminster Hall two or three times while Phineas tried to justify himself. "I don't think," said he, "that Low quite understands my position when he calls me a coward."

"I am sure, Phineas, he did not mean to do that."

"Do not suppose that I am angry with him. I owe him a great deal too much for that. He is one of the

few friends I have who are entitled to say to me just what they please. But I think he mistakes the matter. When a man becomes crooked from age it is no good telling him to be straight. He 'd be straight if he could. A man can't eat his dinner with a diseased liver as he could when he was well."

"But he may follow advice as to getting his liver in order again."

"And so am I following advice. But Low seems to think the disease should n't be there. The disease is there, and I can't banish it by simply saying that it is not there. If they had hung me outright it would be almost as reasonable to come and tell me afterwards to shake myself and be again alive. I don't think that Low realises what it is to stand in the dock for a week together, with the eyes of all men fixed on you, and a conviction at your heart that every one there believes you to have been guilty of an abominable crime of which you know yourself to have been innocent. For weeks I lived under the belief that I was to be made away with by the hangman, and to leave behind me a name that would make every one who has known me shudder."

"God in His mercy has delivered you from that."

"He has;—and I am thankful. But my back is not strong enough to bear the weight without bending under it. Did you see Rattler going in? There is a man I dread. He is intimate enough with me to congratulate me, but not friend enough to abstain, and he will be sure to say something about his murdered colleague. Very well;—I 'll follow you. Go up rather quick, and I 'll come close after you." Whereupon Mr. Monk entered between the two lamp-posts in the hall, and hurrying along the passages, soon found him-

self at the door of the House. Phineas, with an effort at composure, and a smile that was almost ghastly at the door-keeper, who greeted him with some muttered word of recognition, held on his way close behind his friend, and walked up the House hardly conscious that the benches on each side were empty. There were not a dozen members present, and the Speaker had not as yet taken the chair. Mr. Monk stood by him while he took the oath, and in two minutes he was on a back seat below the gangway, with his friend by him, while the members, in slowly increasing numbers, took their seats. Then there were prayers, and as yet not a single man had spoken to him. As soon as the doors were again open, gentlemen streamed in, and some few who Phineas knew well came and sat near him. One or two shook hands with him, but not one said a word to him of the trial. No one at least did so in this early stage of the day's proceedings; and after half an hour he almost ceased to be afraid.

Then came up an irregular debate on the great Church question of the day, as to which there had been no cessation of the badgering with which Mr. Gresham had been attacked since he came into office. He had thrown out Mr. Daubeny by opposing that gentleman's stupendous measure for disestablishing the Church of England altogether, although,—as was almost daily asserted by Mr. Daubeny and his friends,—he was himself in favour of such total disestablishment. Over and over again Mr. Gresham had acknowledged that he was in favour of disestablishment, protesting that he had opposed Mr. Daubeny's bill without any reference to its merits,—solely on the ground that such a measure should not be accepted from such a quarter. He had

been stout enough, and as his enemies had said, insolent enough, in making these assurances. But still he was accused of keeping his own hand dark, and of omitting to say what bill he would himself propose to bring in respecting the Church in the next session. It was essentially necessary,—so said Mr. Daubeny and his friends,—that the country should know and discuss the proposed measure during the vacation. There was, of course, a good deal of retaliation. Mr. Daubeny had not given the country, or even his own party, much time to discuss his Church Bill. Mr. Gresham assured Mr. Daubeny that he would not feel himself equal to producing a measure that should change the religious position of every individual in the country, and annihilate the traditions and systems of centuries, altogether complete out of his own unaided brain; and he went on to say that were he to do so, he did not think that he should find himself supported in such an effort by the friends with whom he usually worked. On this occasion he declared that the magnitude of the subject and the immense importance of the interests concerned forbade him to anticipate the passing of any measure of general Church Reform in the next session. He was undoubtedly in favour of Church Reform, but was by no means sure that the question was one which required immediate settlement. Of this he was sure,—that nothing in the way of legislative indiscretion could be so injurious to the country as any attempt at a hasty and ill-considered measure on this most momentous of all questions.

The debate was irregular, as it originated with a question asked by one of Mr. Daubeny's supporters,—but it was allowed to proceed for a while. In answer

to Mr. Gresham, Mr. Daubeny himself spoke, accusing Mr. Gresham of almost every known parliamentary vice in having talked of a measure coming, like Minerva, from his, Mr. Daubeny's, own brain. The plain and simple words by which such an accusation might naturally be refuted would be unparliamentary; but it would not be unparliamentary to say that it was reckless, unfounded, absurd, monstrous, and incredible. Then there were various very spirited references to Church matters, which concern us chiefly because Mr. Daubeny congratulated the House upon seeing a Roman Catholic gentleman with whom they were all well acquainted, and whose presence in the House was desired by each side alike, again take his seat for an English borough. And he hoped that he might at the same time take the liberty of congratulating that gentleman on the courage and manly dignity with which he had endured the unexampled hardships of the cruel position in which he had been placed by an untoward combination of circumstances. It was thought that Mr. Daubeny did the thing very well, and that he was right in doing it;—but during the doing of it poor Phineas winced in agony. Of course every member was looking at him, and every stranger in the galleries. He did not know at the moment whether it behoved him to rise and make some gesture to the House, or to say a word, or to keep his seat and make no sign. There was a general hum of approval, and the Prime Minister turned round and bowed graciously to the newly sworn member. As he said afterwards, it was just this which he had feared. But there must surely have been something of consolation in the general respect with which he was treated. At the moment he

behaved with natural instinctive dignity, though himself doubting the propriety of his own conduct. He said not a word, and made no sign, but sat with his eyes fixed upon the member from whom the compliment had come. Mr. Daubeny went on with his tirade, and was called violently to order. The Speaker declared that the whole debate had been irregular, but had been allowed by him in deference to what seemed to be the general will of the House. Then the two leaders of the two parties composed themselves, throwing off their indignation while they covered themselves well up with their hats,—and, in accordance with the order of the day, an honourable member rose to propose a pet measure of his own for preventing the adulteration of beer by the publicans. He had made a calculation that the annual average mortality of England would be reduced one and a half per cent., or in other words that every English subject born would live seven months longer if the action of the legislature could provide that the publicans should sell the beer as it came from the brewers. Immediately there was such a rush of members to the door that not a word said by the philanthropic would-be purifier of the national beverage could be heard. The quarrels of rival Ministers were dear to the House, and as long as they could be continued the benches were crowded by gentlemen enthralled by the interest of the occasion. But to sink from that to private legislation about beer was to fall into a bathos which gentlemen could not endure; and so the House was emptied, and at about half-past seven there was a count-out. That gentleman whose statistics had been procured with so much care, and who had been at work for the last twelve months on

his effort to prolong the lives of his fellow-countrymen, was almost broken-hearted. But he knew the world too well to complain. He would try again next year, if by dint of energetic perseverance he could procure a day.

Mr. Monk and Phineas Finn, behaving no better than the others, slipped out in the crowd. It had indeed been arranged that they should leave the House early, so that they might dine together at Mr. Monk's house. Though Phineas had been released from his prison now for nearly a month, he had not as yet once dined out of his own rooms. He had not been inside a club, and hardly ventured during the day into the streets about Pall Mall and Piccadilly. He had been frequently to Portman Square, but had not even seen Madame Goesler. Now he was to dine out for the first time; but there was to be no guest but himself.

"It was n't so bad after all," said Mr. Monk, when they were seated together.

"At any rate it has been done."

"Yes;—and there will be no doing of it over again. I don't like Mr. Daubeny, as you know; but he is happy at that kind of thing."

"I hate men who are what you call happy, but who are never in earnest," said Phineas.

"He was earnest enough, I thought."

"I don't mean about myself, Mr. Monk. I suppose he thought that it was suitable to the occasion that he should say something, and he said it neatly. But I hate men who can make capital out of occasions, who can be neat and appropriate at the spur of the moment,—having, however, probably had the benefit of some forethought, but whose words never savour of truth. If I had happened to have been hung at this time,

—as was so probable,—Mr. Daubeny would have devoted one of his half-hours to the composition of a dozen tragic words which also would have been neat and appropriate. I can hear him say them now, warning young members around him to abstain from embittered words against each other, and I feel sure that the funereal grace of such an occasion would have become him even better than the generosity of his congratulations."

"It is rather grim matter for joking, Phineas."

"Grim enough; but the grimness and the jokes are always running through my mind together. I used to spend hours in thinking what my dear friends would say about it when they found that I had been hung in mistake;—how Sir Gregory Grogram would like it, and whether men would think about it as they went home from the Universe at night. I had various questions to ask and answer for myself,—whether they would pull up my poor body, for instance, from what unhallowed ground is used for gallows corpses, and give it decent burial, placing 'M.P. for Tankerville' after my name on some more or less explicit tablet."

"Mr. Daubeny's speech was, perhaps, preferable on the whole."

"Perhaps it was;—though I used to feel assured that the explicit tablet would be as clear to my eyes in purgatory as Mr. Daubeny's words have been to my ears this afternoon. I never for a moment doubted that the truth would be known before long,—but did doubt so very much whether it would be known in time. I 'll go home now, Mr. Monk, and endeavour to get the matter off my mind. I will resolve, at any rate, that nothing shall make me talk about it any more."

CHAPTER XXI.

AT MATCHING.

For about a week in the August heat of a hot summer Phineas attended Parliament with fair average punctuality, and then prepared for his journey down to Matching Priory. During that week he spoke no word to any one as to his past tribulation, and answered all allusions to it simply by a smile. He had determined to live exactly as though there had been no such episode in his life as that trial at the Old Bailey, and in most respects he did so. During this week he dined at the club, and called at Madame Goesler's house in Park Lane,—not, however, finding the lady at home. Once, and once only, did he break down. On the Wednesday evening he met Barrington Erle, and was asked by him to go to the Universe. At the moment he became very pale, but he at once said that he would go. Had Erle carried him off in a cab the adventure might have been successful, but as they walked, and as they went together through Clarges Street and Bolton Row and Curzon Street, and as the scenes which had been so frequently and so graphically described in court appeared before him one after another, his heart gave way, and he could n't do it. "I know I 'm a fool, Barrington; but if you don't mind I 'll go home. Don't mind me, but just go on." Then he turned and walked home, passing through the passage in which the murder had been committed.

"I brought him as far as the next street," Barrington Erle said to one of their friends at the club, "but I could n't get him in. I doubt if he 'll ever be here again."

It was past six o'clock in the evening when he reached Matching Priory. The Duchess had especially assured him that a brougham should be waiting for him at the nearest station, and on arriving there he found that he had the brougham to himself. He had thought a great deal about it, and had endeavoured to make his calculations. He knew that Madame Goesler would be at Matching, and it would be necessary that he should say something of his thankfulness at their first meeting. But how should he meet her,—and in what way should he greet her when they met? Would any arrangement be made, or would all be left to chance? Should he go at once to his own chamber, —so as to show himself first when dressed for dinner, or should he allow himself to be taken into any of the morning rooms in which the other guests would be congregated? He had certainly not sufficiently considered the character of the Duchess when he imagined that she would allow these things to arrange themselves. She was one of those women whose minds were always engaged on such matters, and who are able to see how things will go. It must not be asserted of her that her delicacy was untainted, or her taste perfect; but she was clever,—discreet in the midst of indiscretions,— thoughtful, and good-natured. She had considered it all, arranged it all, and given her orders with accuracy. When Phineas entered the hall,—the brougham with the luggage having been taken round to some back door,—he was at once ushered by a silent man in black

into the little sitting-room on the ground floor in which the old Duke used to take delight. Here he found two ladies,—but only two ladies,—waiting to receive him. The Duchess came forward to welcome him, while Madame Goesler remained in the background, with composed face,—as though she by no means expected his arrival and he had chanced to come upon them as she was standing by the window. He was thinking of her much more than of her companion, though he knew also how much he owed to the kindness of the Duchess. But what she had done for him had come from caprice, whereas the other had been instigated and guided by affection. He understood all that, and must have shown his feeling on his countenance. "Yes, there she is," said the Duchess, laughing. She had already told him that he was welcome to Matching, and had spoken some short word of congratulation at his safe deliverance from his troubles. "If ever one friend was grateful to another, you should be grateful to her, Mr. Finn." He did not speak, but walking across the room to the window by which Marie Goesler stood, took her right hand in his, and passing his left arm round her waist, kissed her first on one cheek and then on the other. The blood flew to her face and suffused her forehead, but she did not speak, or resist him, or make any effort to escape from his embrace. As for him, he had not thought of it at all. He had made no plan. No idea of kissing her when they should meet had occurred to him till the moment came. "Excellently well done," said the Duchess, still laughing with silent pleasant laughter. "And now tell us how you are after all your troubles."

He remained with them for half an hour, till the

"*Excellently well done.*"

E. J. Read

C. J. Read

ladies went to dress, when he was handed over to some groom of the chambers to show him his room. "The Duke ought to be here to welcome you, of course," said the Duchess; "but you know official matters too well to expect a President of the Board of Trade to do his domestic duties. We dine at eight; five minutes before that time he will begin adding up his last row of figures for the day. You never added up rows of figures, I think. You only managed colonies." So they parted till dinner, and Phineas remembered how very little had been spoken by Madame Goesler, and how few of the words which he had spoken had been addressed to her. She had sat silent, smiling, radiant, very beautiful as he had thought, but contented to listen to her friend the Duchess. She, the Duchess, had asked questions of all sorts, and made many statements; and he had found that with those two women he could speak without discomfort, almost with pleasure, on subjects which he could not bear to have touched by men. "Of course you knew all along who killed the poor man," the Duchess had said. "We did;—did we not, Marie?—just as well as if we had seen it. She was quite sure that he had got out of the house and back into it, and that he must have had a key. So she started off to Prague to find the key; and she found it. And we were quite sure too about the coat; —were n't we? That poor blundering Lord Fawn could n't explain himself, but we knew that the coat he saw was quite different from any coat you would wear in such weather. We discussed it all over so often;—every point of it. Poor Lord Fawn! They say that it has made quite an old man of him. And as for those policemen who did n't find the life-pre-

server; I only think that something ought to be done to them."

"I hope that nothing will ever be done to anybody, Duchess."

"Not to the Reverend Mr. Emilius;—poor dear Lady Eustace's Mr. Emilius? I do think that you ought to desire that an end should be put to his enterprising career! I 'm sure I do." This was said while the attempt was still being made to trace the purchase of the bludgeon in Paris. "We 've got Sir Gregory Grogram here on purpose to meet you, and you must fraternise with him immediately, to show that you bear no grudge."

"He only did his duty."

"Exactly;—though I think he was an addle-pated old ass not to see the thing more clearly. As you 'll be coming into the Government before long, we thought that things had better be made straight between you and Sir Gregory. I wonder how it was that nobody but women did see it clearly? Look at that delightful woman, Mrs. Bunce. You must bring Mrs. Bunce to me some day,—or take me to her."

"Lord Chiltern saw it clearly enough," said Phineas.

"My dear Mr. Finn, Lord Chiltern is the best fellow in the world, but he has only one idea. He was quite sure of your innocence because you ride to hounds. If it had been found possible to accuse poor Mr. Fothergill, he would have been as certain that Mr. Fothergill committed the murder, because Mr. Fothergill thinks more of his shooting. However, Lord Chiltern is to be here in a day or two, and I mean to go absolutely down on my knees to him,—and all for your sake. If foxes can be had, he shall have foxes. We

must go and dress now, Mr. Finn, and I 'll ring for somebody to show you your room."

Phineas, as soon as he was alone, thought, not of what the Duchess had said, but of the manner in which he had greeted his friend, Madame Goesler. As he remembered what he had done, he also blushed. Had she been angry with him, and intended to show her anger by her silence? And why had he done it? What had he meant? He was quite sure that he would not have given those kisses had he and Madame Goesler been alone in the room together. The Duchess had applauded him,—but yet he thought that he regretted it. There had been matters between him and Marie Goesler of which he was quite sure that the Duchess knew nothing.

When he went downstairs he found a crowd in the drawing-room, from among whom the Duke came forward to welcome him. "I am particularly happy to see you at Matching," said the Duke. "I wish we had shooting to offer you, but we are too far south for the grouse. That was a bitter passage-of-arms the other day, was n't it? I am fond of bitterness in debate myself, but I do regret the roughness of the House of Commons. I must confess that I do." The Duke did not say a word about the trial, and the Duke's guests followed their host's example.

The house was full of people, most of whom had before been known to Phineas, and many of whom had been asked specially to meet him. Lord and Lady Cantrip were there, and Mr. Monk, and Sir Gregory his accuser, and the Home Secretary, Sir Harry Coldfoot, with his wife. Sir Harry had at one time been very keen about hanging our hero, and was now of

course hot with reactionary zeal. To all those who had been in any way concerned in the prosecution, the accidents by which Phineas had been enabled to escape had been almost as fortunate as to Phineas himself. Sir Gregory himself quite felt that had he prosecuted an innocent and very popular young member of Parliament to the death, he could never afterwards have hoped to wear his ermine in comfort. Barrington Erle was there, of course, intending, however, to return to the duties of his office on the following day, —and our old friend Laurence Fitzgibbon with a newly married wife, a lady possessing a reputed fifty thousand pounds, by which it was hoped that the member for Mayo might be placed steadily upon his legs forever. And Adelaide Palliser was there also,—the Duke's first cousin,—on whose behalf the Duchess was anxious to be more than ordinarily good-natured. Mr. Maule, Adelaide's rejected lover, had dined on one occasion with the Duke and Duchess in London. There had been nothing remarkable at the dinner, and he had not at all understood why he had been asked. But when he took his leave, the Duchess had told him that she would hope to see him at Matching. "We expect a friend of yours to be with us," the Duchess had said. He had afterwards received a written invitation and had accepted it; but he was not to reach Matching till the day after that on which Phineas arrived. Adelaide had been told of his coming only on this morning, and had been much flurried by the news.

"But we have quarrelled," she said. "Then the best thing you can do is to make it up again, my dear," said the Duchess. Miss Palliser was undoubtedly of that opinion herself, but she hardly believed that so

terrible an evil as a quarrel with her lover could be composed by so rough a remedy as this. The Duchess, who had become used to all the disturbing excitements of life, and who did n't pay so much respect as some do to the niceties of a young lady's feelings, thought that it would be only necessary to bring the young people together again. If she could do that, and provide them with an income, of course they would marry. On the present occasion Phineas was told off to take Miss Palliser down to dinner. "You saw the Chilterns before they left town, I know," she said.

"Oh yes. I am constantly in Portman Square."

"Of course. Lady Laura has gone down to Scotland, has she not, and all alone?"

"She is alone now, I believe."

"How dreadful! I do not know any one that I pity so much as I do her. I was in the house with her some time, and she gave me the idea of being the most unhappy woman I had ever met with. Don't you think that she is very unhappy?"

"She has had very much to make her so," said Phineas. "She was obliged to leave her husband because of the gloom of his insanity;—and now she is a widow."

"I don't suppose she ever really—cared for him; did she?" The question was no sooner asked than the poor girl remembered the whole story, which she had heard some time back,—the rumour of her husband's jealousy and of the wife's love, and she became as red as fire, and unable to help herself. She could think of no word to say, and confessed her confusion by her sudden silence.

Phineas saw it all, and did his best for her. "I am sure she cared for him," he said, "though I do not

think it was a well-assorted marriage. They had different ideas about religion, I fancy. So you saw the hunting in the Brake country to the end? How is our old friend, Mr. Spooner?"

"Don't talk of him, Mr. Finn."

"I rather like Mr. Spooner;—and as for hunting the country, I don't think Chiltern could get on without him. What a capital fellow your cousin the Duke is."

"I hardly know him."

"He is such a gentleman;—and, at the same time, the most abstract and the most concrete man that I know."

"Abstract and concrete?"

"You are bound to use adjectives of that sort now, Miss Palliser, if you mean to be anybody in conversation."

"But how is my cousin concrete? He is always abstracted when I speak to him, I know."

"No Englishman whom I have met is so broadly and intuitively and unceremoniously imbued with the simplicity of the character of a gentleman. He could no more lie than he could eat grass."

"Is that abstract or concrete?"

"That 's abstract. And I know no one who is so capable of throwing himself into one matter for the sake of accomplishing that one thing at a time. That 's concrete." And so the red colour faded away from poor Adelaide's face, and the unpleasantness was removed.

"What do you think of Laurence's wife?" Erle said to him late in the evening.

"I have only just seen her. The money is there, I suppose."

"The money is there, I believe; but then it will have to remain there. He can't touch it. There 's about £2,000 a year, which will have to go back to her family unless they have children."

"I suppose she 's—forty?"

"Well, yes; or perhaps forty-five. You were locked up at the time, poor fellow,—and had other things to think of; but all the interest we had for anything beyond you through May and June was devoted to Laurence and his prospects. It was off and on, and on and off, and he was in a most wretched condition. At last she would n't consent unless she was to be asked here."

"And who managed it?"

"Laurence came and told it all to the Duchess, and she gave him the invitation at once."

"Who told you?"

"Not the Duchess,—nor yet Laurence. So it may be untrue, you know;—but I believe it. He did ask me whether he 'd have to stand another election at his marriage. He has been going in and out of office so often, and always going back to the Co. Mayo at the expense of half a year's salary, that his mind had got confused, and he did n't quite know what did and what did not vacate his seat. We must all come to it sooner or later, I suppose, but the question is whether we could do better than an annuity of £2,000 a year on the life of the lady. Office is n't very permanent, but one has not to attend the House above six months a year, while you can't get away from a wife much above a week at a time. It has crippled him in appearance very much, I think."

"A man always looks changed when he 's married."

"I hope, Mr. Finn, that you owe me no grudge," said Sir Gregory, the attorney-general.

"Not in the least; why should I?"

"It was a very painful duty that I had to perform,—the most painful that ever befell me. I had no alternative but to do it, of course, and to do it in the hope of reaching the truth. But a counsel for the prosecution must always appear to the accused and his friends like a hound running down his game, and anxious for blood. The habitual and almost necessary acrimony of the defence creates acrimony in the attack. If you were accustomed as I am to criminal courts you would observe this constantly. A gentleman gets up and declares in perfect faith that he is simply anxious to lay before the jury such evidence as has been placed in his hands. And he opens his case in that spirit. Then his witnesses are cross-examined with the affected incredulity and assumed indignation which the defending counsel is almost bound to use on behalf of his client, and he finds himself gradually imbued with pugnacity. He becomes strenuous, energetic, and perhaps eager for what must after all be regarded as success, and at last he fights for a verdict rather than for the truth."

"The judge, I suppose, ought to put all that right?"

"So he does;—and it comes right. Our criminal practice does not sin on the side of severity. But a barrister employed on the prosecution should keep himself free from that personal desire for a verdict which must animate those engaged on the defence."

"Then I suppose you wanted to—hang me, Sir Gregory."

"Certainly not. I wanted the truth. But you in your position must have regarded me as a bloodhound."

"I did not. As far as I can analyse my own feelings, I entertained anger only against those who, though they knew me well, thought that I was guilty."

"You will allow me, at any rate, to shake hands with you," said Sir Gregory, "and to assure you that I should have lived a broken-hearted man if the truth had been known too late. As it is, I tremble and shake in my shoes as I walk about and think of what might have been done." Then Phineas gave his hand to Sir Gregory, and from that time forth was inclined to think well of Sir Gregory.

Throughout the whole evening he was unable to speak to Madame Goesler, but to the other people around him he found himself talking quite at his ease, as though nothing peculiar had happened to him. Almost everybody, except the Duke, made some slight allusion to his adventure, and he, in spite of his resolution to the contrary, found himself driven to talk of it. It had seemed quite natural that Sir Gregory,—who had in truth been eager for his condemnation, thinking him to have been guilty,—should come to him and make peace with him by telling him of the nature of the work that had been imposed upon him;—and when Sir Harry Coldfoot assured him that never in his life had his mind been relieved of so heavy a weight as when he received the information about the key,—that also was natural. A few days ago he had thought that these allusions would kill him. The prospect of them had kept him a prisoner in his lodgings; but now he smiled and chatted, and was quiet and at ease.

"Good night, Mr. Finn," the Duchess said to him; "I know the people have been boring you."

"Not in the least."

"I saw Sir Gregory at it, and I can guess what Sir Gregory was talking about."

"I like Sir Gregory, Duchess."

"That shows a very Christian disposition on your part. And then there was Sir Harry. I understood it all, but I could not hinder it. But it had to be done, had n't it? And now there will be an end of it."

"Everybody has treated me very well," said Phineas, almost in tears. "Some people have been so kind to me that I cannot understand why it should have been so."

"Because some people are your very excellent good friends. We,—that is, Marie and I, you know,—thought it would be the best thing for you to come down and get through it all here. We could see that you were n't driven too hard. By-the-bye, you have hardly seen her,—have you?"

"Hardly, since I was upstairs with your Grace."

"My Grace will manage better for you to-morrow. I did n't like to tell you to take her out to dinner, because it would have looked a little particular after her very remarkable journey to Prague. If you ain't grateful you must be a wretch."

"But I am grateful."

"Well;—we shall see. Good night. You 'll find a lot of men going to smoke somewhere, I don't doubt."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE TRUMPETON FEUD IS SETTLED.

In these fine early autumn days spent at Matching, the great Trumpeton Wood question was at last settled. During the summer, considerable acerbity had been added to the matter by certain articles which had appeared in certain sporting papers, in which the new Duke of Omnium was accused of neglecting his duty to the county in which a portion of his property lay. The question was argued at considerable length. Is a landed proprietor bound, or is he not, to keep foxes for the amusement of his neighbours? To ordinary thinkers, to unprejudiced outsiders,—to Americans, let us say, or Frenchmen,—there does not seem to be room even for an argument. By what law of God or man can a man be bound to maintain a parcel of injurious vermin on his property, in the pursuit of which he finds no sport himself, and which are highly detrimental to another sport in which he takes, perhaps, the keenest interest? Trumpeton Wood was the Duke's own,—to do just as he pleased with it. Why should foxes be demanded from him, then, any more than a bear to be baited, or a badger to be drawn in, let us say, his London dining-room? But a good deal had been said which, though not perhaps capable of convincing the unprejudiced American or Frenchman, had been regarded as cogent arguments to country-bred Englishmen. The Brake hunt had been established for a

great many years, and was the central attraction of a district well known for its hunting propensities. The preservation of foxes might be an open question in such counties as Norfolk and Suffolk, but could not be so in the Brake country. Many things are, no doubt, permissible under the law, which, if done, would show the doer of them to be the enemy of his species,—and this destruction of foxes in a hunting country may be named as one of them. The Duke might have his foxes destroyed if he pleased, but he could hardly do so and remain a popular magnate in England. If he chose to put himself in opposition to the desires and very instincts of the people among whom his property was situated, he must live as a "man forbid." That was the general argument, and then there was the argument special to this particular case. As it happened, Trumpeton Wood was, and always had been, the great nursery of foxes for that side of the Brake country. Gorse coverts make, no doubt, the charm of hunting, but gorse coverts will not hold foxes unless the woodlands be preserved. The fox is a travelling animal. Knowing well that "home-staying youths have ever homely wits," he goes out and sees the world. He is either born in the woodlands, or wanders thither in his early youth. If all foxes so wandering be doomed to death, if poison, and wires, and traps, and hostile keepers await them there instead of the tender welcome of the loving fox-preserver, the gorse coverts will soon be empty, and the whole country will be afflicted with a wild dismay. All which Lord Chiltern understood well when he became so loud in his complaint against the Duke.

But our dear old friend, only the other day a duke—

Planty Pall as he was lately called, devoted to work and to Parliament, an unselfish, friendly, wise man, who by no means wanted other men to cut their coats according to his pattern—was the last man in England to put himself forward as the enemy of an established delight. He did not hunt himself,—but neither did he shoot, or fish, or play cards. He recreated himself with blue books, and speculations on Adam Smith had been his distraction;—but he knew that he was himself peculiar, and he respected the habits of others. It had fallen out in this wise. As the old Duke had become very old, the old Duke's agent had gradually acquired more than an agent's proper influence in the property; and as the Duke's heir would not shoot himself, or pay attention to the shooting, and as the Duke would not let the shooting of his wood, Mr. Fothergill, the steward, had gradually become omnipotent. Now Mr. Fothergill was not a hunting man,—but the mischief did not at all lie there. Lord Chiltern would not communicate with Mr. Fothergill. Lord Chiltern would write to the Duke, and Mr. Fothergill became an established enemy. Hinc illæ iræ. From this source sprung all those powerfully argued articles in The Field, Bell's Life, and Land and Water;—for on this matter all the sporting papers were of one mind.

There is something doubtless absurd in the intensity of the worship paid to the fox by hunting communities. The animal becomes sacred, and his preservation is a religion. His irregular destruction is a profanity, and words spoken to his injury are blasphemous. Not long since a gentleman shot a fox running across a woodland ride in a hunting country. He had mistaken it for a hare, and had done the deed in the pres-

ence of keepers, owner, and friends. His feelings were so acute and his remorse so great that, in their pity, they had resolved to spare him; and then, on the spot, entered into a solemn compact that no one should be told. Encouraged by the forbearing tenderness, the unfortunate one ventured to return to the house of his friend, the owner of the wood, hoping that, in spite of the sacrilege committed, he might be able to face a world that would be ignorant of his crime. As the vulpicide, on the afternoon of the day of the deed, went along the corridor to his room, one maid-servant whispered to another, and the poor victim of an imperfect sight heard the words—"That 's he as shot the fox!" The gentleman did not appear at dinner, nor was he ever again seen in those parts.

Mr. Fothergill had become angry. Lord Chiltern, as we know, had been very angry. And even the Duke was angry. The Duke was angry because Lord Chiltern had been violent;—and Lord Chiltern had been violent because Mr. Fothergill's conduct had been, to his thinking, not only sacrilegious, but one continued course of wilful sacrilege. It may be said of Lord Chiltern that in his eagerness as a master of hounds he had almost abandoned his love of riding. To kill a certain number of foxes in the year, after the legitimate fashion, had become to him the one great study of life; —and he did it with an energy equal to that which the Duke devoted to decimal coinage. His huntsman was always well mounted, with two horses; but Lord Chiltern would give up his own to the man and take charge of a weary animal as a common groom when he found that he might thus further the object of the day's sport. He worked as men work only at pleasure. He never

missed a day, even when cub-hunting required that he should leave his bed at 3 A.M. He was constant at his kennel. He was always thinking about it. He devoted his life to the Brake hounds. And it was too much for him that such a one as Mr. Fothergill should be allowed to wire foxes in Trumpeton Wood! The Duke's property, indeed! Surely all that was understood in England by this time. Now he had consented to come to Matching, bringing his wife with him, in order that the matter might be settled. There had been a threat that he would give up the country, in which case it was declared that it would be impossible to carry on the Brake hunt in a manner satisfactory to masters, subscribers, owners of coverts, or farmers, unless a different order of things should be made to prevail in regard to Trumpeton Wood.

The Duke, however, had declined to interfere personally. He had told his wife that he should be delighted to welcome Lord and Lady Chiltern,—as he would any other friends of hers. The guests, indeed, at the Duke's house were never his guests, but always hers. But he could not allow himself to be brought into an argument with Lord Chiltern as to the management of his own property. The Duchess was made to understand that she must prevent any such awkwardness. And she did prevent it. "And now, Lord Chiltern," she said, "how about the foxes?" She had taken care there should be a council of war around her. Lady Chiltern and Madame Goesler were present, and also Phineas Finn.

"Well;—how about them?" said the lord, showing by the fiery eagerness of his eye, and the increased redness of his face, that though the matter had been

introduced somewhat jocosely, there could not really be any joke about it.

"Why could n't you keep it all out of the newspapers?"

"I don't write the newspapers, Duchess. I can't help the newspapers. When two hundred men ride through Trumpeton Wood, and see one fox found, and that fox with only three pads, of course the newspapers will say that the foxes are trapped."

"We may have traps if we like it, Lord Chiltern."

"Certainly;—only say so, and we shall know where we are." He looked very angry, and poor Lady Chiltern was covered with dismay. "The Duke can destroy the hunt if he pleases, no doubt," said the lord.

"But we don't like traps, Lord Chiltern;—nor yet poison, nor anything that is wicked. I 'd go and nurse the foxes myself if I knew how, would n't I, Marie?"

"They have robbed the Duchess of her sleep for the last six months," said Madame Goesler.

"And if they go on being not properly brought up and educated, they will make an old woman of me. As for the Duke, he can't be comfortable in his arithmetic for thinking of them. But what can one do?"

"Change your keepers," said Lord Chiltern energetically.

"It is easy to say,—change your keepers. How am I to set about it? To whom can I apply to appoint others? Don't you know what vested interests mean, Lord Chiltern?"

"Then nobody can manage his own property as he pleases?"

"Nobody can,—unless he does the work himself. If I were to go and live in Trumpeton Wood, I could

do it; but you see I have to live here. I vote that we have an officer of state, to go in and out with the Government,—with a seat in the cabinet or not according as things go, and that we call him Foxmaster-General. It would be just the thing for Mr. Finn."

"There would be a salary, of course," said Phineas.

"Then I suppose that nothing can be done," said Lord Chiltern.

"My dear Lord Chiltern, everything has been done. Vested interests have been attended to. Keepers shall prefer foxes to pheasants, wires shall be unheard of, and Trumpeton Wood shall once again be the glory of the Brake hunt. It won't cost the Duke above a thousand or two a year."

"I should be very sorry indeed to put the Duke to any unnecessary expense," said Lord Chiltern solemnly, —still fearing that the Duchess was only playing with him. It made him angry that he could not imbue other people with his idea of the seriousness of the amusement of a whole county.

"Do not think of it. We have pensioned poor Mr. Fothergill, and he retires from the administration."

"Then it 'll be all right," said Lord Chiltern.

"I am so glad," said his wife.

"And so the great Mr. Fothergill falls from power, and goes down into obscurity," said Madame Goesler.

"He was an impudent old man, and that 's the truth," said the Duchess;—"and he has always been my thorough detestation. But if you only knew what I have gone through to get rid of him,—and all on account of Trumpeton Wood,—you 'd send me every brush taken in the Brake country during the next season."

"Your Grace shall at any rate have one of them," said Lord Chiltern.

On the next day Lord and Lady Chiltern went back to Harrington Hall. When the end of August comes, a master of hounds,—who is really a master,—is wanted at home. Nothing short of an embassy on behalf of the great coverts of his country would keep this master away at present; and now, his diplomacy having succeeded, he hurried back to make the most of its results. Lady Chiltern, before she went, made a little speech to Phineas Finn.

"You 'll come to us in the winter, Mr. Finn?"

"I should like."

"You must. No one was truer to you than we were, you know. Indeed, regarding you as we do, how should we not have been true? It was impossible to me that my old friend should have been——"

"Oh, Lady Chiltern!"

"Of course you 'll come. You owe it to us to come. And may I say this? If there be anybody to come with you, that will make it only so much the better. If it should be so, of course there will be letters written?" To this question, however, Phineas Finn made no answer.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MADAME GOESLER'S LEGACY.

One morning, very shortly after her return to Harrington, Lady Chiltern was told that Mr. Spooner of Spoon Hall had called, and desired to see her. She suggested that the gentleman had probably asked for her husband,—who, at that moment, was enjoying his recovered supremacy in the centre of Trumpeton Wood; but she was assured that on this occasion Mr. Spooner's mission was to herself. She had no quarrel with Mr. Spooner, and she went to him at once. After the first greeting he rushed into the subject of the great triumph. "So we 've got rid of Mr. Fothergill, Lady Chiltern."

"Yes; Mr. Fothergill will not, I believe, trouble us any more. He is an old man, it seems, and has retired from the Duke's service."

"I can't tell you how glad I am, Lady Chiltern. We were afraid that Chiltern would have thrown it up, and then I don't know where we should have been. England would not have been England any longer, to my thinking, if we had n't won the say. It 'd have been just like a French revolution. Nobody could have known what was coming or where he was going."

That Mr. Spooner should be enthusiastic on any hunting question was a matter of course; but still it seemed to be odd that he should have driven himself over from Spoon Hall to pour his feelings into Lady

Chiltern's ear. "We shall go on very nicely now, I don't doubt," said she; "and I 'm sure that Lord Chiltern will be glad to find that you are pleased."

"I am very much pleased, I can tell you." Then he paused, and the tone of his voice was changed altogether when he spoke again. "But I did n't come over only about that, Lady Chiltern. Miss Palliser has not come back with you, Lady Chiltern?"

"We left Miss Palliser at Matching. You know she is the Duke's cousin."

"I wish she was n't, with all my heart."

"Why should you want to rob her of her relations, Mr. Spooner?"

"Because—because—— I don't want to say a word against her, Lady Chiltern. To me she is perfect as a star;—beautiful as a rose." Mr. Spooner as he said this pointed first to the heavens and then to the earth. "But perhaps she would n't have been so proud of her grandfather had n't he been a duke."

"I don't think she is proud of that."

"People do think of it, Lady Chiltern; and I don't say that they ought not. Of course it makes a difference, and when a man lives altogether in the country, as I do, it seems to signify so much more. But if you go back to old county families, Lady Chiltern, the Spooners have been here pretty nearly as long as the Pallisers,—if not longer. The Desponders, from whom we come, came over with William the Conqueror."

"I have always heard that there is n't a more respectable family in the county."

"That there is n't. There was a grant of land, which took their name, and became the Manor of Despond; there 's where Spoon Hall is now. Sir

Thomas Desponder was one of those who demanded the Charter, though his name was n't always given, because he was n't a baron. Perhaps Miss Palliser does not know all that."

"I doubt whether she cares about those things."

"Women do care about them,—very much. Perhaps she has heard of the two spoons crossed, and does n't know that that was a stupid vulgar practical joke. Our crest is a knight's head bowed, with the motto, 'Desperandum.' Soon after the Conquest, one of the Desponders fell in love with the Queen, and never would give it up, though it was n't any good. Her name was Matilda, and so he went as a crusader and got killed. But wherever he went he had the knight's head bowed, and the motto on the shield."

"What a romantic story, Mr. Spooner!"

"Is n't it? And it 's quite true. That 's the way we became Spooners. I never told her of it, but, somehow I wish I had now. It always seemed that she did n't think that I was anybody."

"The truth is, Mr. Spooner, that she was always thinking that somebody else was everything. When a gentleman is told that a lady's affections have been pre-engaged, however much he may regret the circumstances, he cannot, I think, feel any hurt to his pride. If I understand the matter, Miss Palliser explained to you that she was engaged when first you spoke to her."

"You are speaking of young Gerard Maule."

"Of course I am speaking of Mr. Maule."

"But she has quarrelled with him, Lady Chiltern."

"Don't you know what such quarrels come to?"

"Well, no. That is to say, everybody tells me that it is really broken off, and that he has gone nobody

knows where. At any rate he never shows himself. He does n't mean it, Lady Chiltern."

"I don't know what he means."

"And he can't afford it, Lady Chiltern. I mean it, and I can afford it. Surely that might go for something."

"I cannot say what Mr. Maule may mean to do, Mr. Spooner, but I think it only fair to tell you that he is at present staying at Matching, under the same roof with Miss Palliser."

"Maule staying at the Duke's!" When Mr. Spooner heard this there came a sudden change over his face. His jaw fell, and his mouth was opened, and the redness of his cheeks flew up to his forehead.

"He was expected there yesterday, and I need hardly suggest to you what will be the end of the quarrel."

"Going to the Duke's won't give him an income."

"I know nothing about that, Mr. Spooner. But it really seems to me that you misinterpret the nature of the affections of such a girl as Miss Palliser. Do you think it likely that she should cease to love a man because he is not so rich as another?"

"People, when they get married, want a house to live in, Lady Chiltern. Now at Spoon Hall——"

"Believe me, that is in vain, Mr. Spooner."

"You are quite sure of it?"

"Quite sure."

"I 'd have done anything for her,—anything! She might have had what settlements she pleased. I told Ned that he must go, if she made a point of it. I 'd have gone abroad, or lived just anywhere. I 'd come to that,—that I did n't mind the hunting a bit."

"I 'm sorry for you,—I am indeed."

"It cuts a fellow all to pieces so! And yet what is it all about? A slip of a girl that is n't anything so very much out of the way after all. Lady Chiltern, I should n't care if the horses kicked the trap all to pieces going back to Spoon Hall, and me with it."

"You 'll get over it, Mr. Spooner."

"Get over it! I suppose I shall; but I shall never be as I was. I 've been always thinking of the day when there must be a lady at Spoon Hall, and putting it off, you know. There 'll never be a lady there now; —never. You don't think there 's any chance at all?"

"I 'm sure there is none."

"I 'd give half I 've got in all the world," said the wretched man, "just to get it out of my head. I know what it will come to." Though he paused, Lady Chiltern could ask no question respecting Mr. Spooner's future prospects. "It 'll be two bottles of champagne at dinner, and two bottles of claret afterwards, every day. I only hope she 'll know that she did it. Good-bye, Lady Chiltern. I thought that perhaps you 'd have helped me."

"I cannot help you."

"Good-bye." So he went down to his trap, and drove himself violently home,—without, however, achieving the ruin which he desired. Let us hope that as time cures his wound, that threat as to increased consumption of wine may fall to the ground unfulfilled.

In the meantime Gerard Maule had arrived at Matching Priory.

"We have quarrelled," Adelaide had said when the Duchess told her that her lover was to come. "Then you had better make it up again," the Duchess had answered,—and there had been an end of it. Noth-

ing more was done; no arrangement was made, and Adelaide was left to meet the man as best she might. The quarrel to her had been as the disruption of the heavens. She had declared to herself that she would bear it; but the misfortune to be borne was a broken world falling about her own ears. She had thought of a nunnery, of Ophelia among the water-lilies, and of an early death-bed. Then she had pictured to herself the somewhat ascetic and very laborious life of an old maiden lady whose only recreation fifty years hence should consist in looking at the portrait of him who had once been her lover. And now she was told that he was coming to Matching as though nothing had been the matter! She tried to think whether it was not her duty to have her things at once packed, and ask for a carriage to take her to the railway station. But she was in the house of her nearest relative,—of him and also of her who were bound to see that things were right; and then there might be a more pleasurable existence than that which would have to depend on a photograph for its keenest delight. But how should she meet him? In what way should she address him? Should she ignore the quarrel, or recognise it, or take some milder course? She was half afraid of the Duchess, and could not ask for assistance. And the Duchess, though good-natured, seemed to her to be rough. There was nobody at Matching to whom she could say a word;—so she lived on, and trembled, and doubted from hour to hour whether the world would not come to an end.

The Duchess was rough, but she was very good-natured. She had contrived that the two lovers should be brought into the same house, and did not doubt at

all but what they would be able to adjust their own little differences when they met. Her experiences of the world had certainly made her more alive to the material prospects than to the delicate aroma of a love adventure. She had been greatly knocked about herself, and the material prospects had come uppermost. But all that had happened to her had tended to open her hand to other people, and had enabled her to be good-natured with delight, even when she knew that her friends imposed upon her. She did n't care much for Laurence Fitzgibbon; but when she was told that the lady with money would not consent to marry the aristocratic pauper except on condition that she should be received at Matching, the Duchess at once gave the invitation. And now, though she could n't go into the "fal-lallery,"—as she called it to Madame Goesler,—of settling a meeting between two young people who had fallen out, she worked hard till she accomplished something perhaps more important to their future happiness. "Plantagenet," she said, "there can be no objection to your cousin having that money."

"My dear!"

"Oh come; you must remember about Adelaide, and that young man who is coming here to-day."

"You told me that Adelaide is to be married. I don't know anything about the young man."

"His name is Maule, and he is a gentleman, and all that. Some day when his father dies he 'll have a small property somewhere."

"I hope he has a profession."

"No, he has not. I told you all that before."

"If he has nothing at all, Glencora, why did he ask a young lady to marry him?"

"Oh dear; what 's the good of going into all that? He has got something. They 'll do immensely well, if you 'll only listen. She is your first cousin."

"Of course she is," said Plantagenet, lifting up his hand to his hair.

"And you are bound to do something for her."

"No; I am not bound. But I 'm very willing,—if you wish it. Put the thing on a right footing."

"I hate footings,—that is, right footings. We can manage this without taking money out of your pocket."

"My dear Glencora, if I am to give my cousin money I shall do so by putting my hand into my own pocket in preference to that of any other person."

"Madame Goesler says that she 'll sign all the papers about the Duke's legacy,—the money, I mean,—if she may be allowed to make it over to the Duke's niece."

"Of course Madame Goesler may do what she likes with her own. I cannot hinder her. But I would rather that you should not interfere. Twenty-five thousand pounds is a very serious sum of money."

"You won't take it."

"Certainly not."

"Nor will Madame Goesler; and therefore there can be no reason why these young people should not have it. Of course Adelaide being the Duke's niece does make a difference. Why else should I care about it? She is nothing to me,—and as for him, I should n't know him again if I were to meet him in the street."

And so the thing was settled. The Duke was powerless against the energy of his wife, and the lawyer was instructed that Madame Goesler would take the proper steps for putting herself into possession of the Duke's legacy,—as far as the money was concerned,

—with the view of transferring it to the Duke's niece, Miss Adelaide Palliser. As for the diamonds, the difficulty could not be solved. Madame Goesler still refused to take them, and desired her lawyer to instruct her as to the form by which she could most thoroughly and conclusively renounce that legacy.

Gerard Maule had his ideas about the meeting which would of course take place at Matching. He would not, he thought, have been asked there had it not been intended that he should marry Adelaide. He did not care much for the grandeur of the Duke and Duchess, but he was conscious of certain profitable advantages which might accrue from such an acknowledgment of his position from the great relatives of his intended bride. It would be something to be married from the house of the Duchess, and to receive his wife from the Duke's hand. His father would probably be driven to acquiesce, and people who were almost omnipotent in the world would at any rate give him a start. He expected no money; nor did he possess that character, whether it be good or bad, which is given to such expectation. But there would be encouragement, and the thing would probably be done. As for the meeting,—he would take her in his arms if he found her alone, and beg her pardon for that cross word about Boulogne. He would assure her that Boulogne itself would be a heaven to him if she were with him,—and he thought that she would believe him. When he reached the house he was asked into a room in which a lot of people were playing billiards or crowded round a billiard-table. The Chilterns were gone, and he was at first ill at ease, finding no friend. Madame Goesler, who had met him at Harrington, came up to

him, and told him that the Duchess would be there directly, and then Phineas, who had been playing at the moment of his entrance, shook hands with him, and said a word or two about the Chilterns. "I was so delighted to hear of your acquittal," said Maule.

"We never talk about that now," said Phineas, going back to his stroke. Adelaide Palliser was not present, and the difficulty of the meeting had not yet been encountered. They all remained in the billiard-room till it was time for the ladies to dress, and Adelaide had not yet ventured to show herself. Somebody offered to take him to his room, and he was conducted upstairs, and told that they dined at eight,—but nothing had been arranged. Nobody had as yet mentioned her name to him. Surely it could not be that she had gone away when she heard that he was coming, and that she, was really determined to make the quarrel perpetual? He had three quarters of an hour in which to get ready for dinner, and he felt himself to be uncomfortable and out of his element. He had been sent to his chamber prematurely, because nobody had known what to do with him; and he wished himself back in London. The Duchess, no doubt, had intended to be good-natured, but she had made a mistake. So he sat by his open window, and looked out on the ruins of the old Priory, which were close to the house, and wondered why he might n't have been allowed to wander about the garden instead of being shut up there in a bedroom. But he felt that it would be unwise to attempt any escape now. He would meet the Duke or the Duchess, or perhaps Adelaide herself, in some of the passages,—and there would be an embarrassment. So he dawdled away the time,

looking out of the window as he dressed, and descended to the drawing-room at eight o'clock. He shook hands with the Duke, and was welcomed by the Duchess, and then glanced round the room. There she was, seated on a sofa between two other ladies,—of whom one was his friend, Madame Goesler. It was essentially necessary that he should notice her in some way, and he walked up to her, and offered her his hand. It was impossible that he should allude to what was past, and he merely muttered something as he stood over her. She blushed up to her eyes and was absolutely dumb. "Mr. Maule, perhaps you 'll take our cousin Adelaide out to dinner," said the Duchess, a moment afterwards, whispering in his ear.

"Have you forgiven me?" he said to her, as they passed from one room to the other.

"I will,—if you care to be forgiven." The Duchess had been quite right, and the quarrel was all over without any arrangement.

On the following morning he was allowed to walk about the grounds without any impediment, and to visit the ruins which had looked so charming to him from the window. Nor was he alone. Miss Palliser was now by no means anxious as she had been yesterday to keep out of the way, and was willingly persuaded to show him all the beauties of the place.

"I should n't have said what I did, I know," pleaded Maule.

"Never mind it now, Gerard."

"I mean about going to Boulogne."

"It did sound so melancholy."

"But I only meant that we should have to be very careful how we lived. I don't know quite whether I

am so good at being careful about money as a fellow ought to be."

"You must take a lesson from me, sir."

"I have sent the horses to Tattersall's," he said in a tone that was almost funereal.

"What!—already?"

"I gave the order yesterday. They are to be sold,—I don't know when. They won't fetch anything. They never do. One always buys bad horses there for a lot of money, and sells good ones for nothing. Where the difference goes to I never could make out."

"I suppose the man gets it who sells them."

"No; he don't. The fellows get it who have their eyes open. My eyes never were open,—except as far as seeing you went."

"Perhaps if you had opened them wider you would n't have to go to——"

"Don't, Adelaide. But, as I was saying about the horses, when they 're sold of course the bills won't go on. And I suppose things will come right. I don't owe so very much."

"I 've got something to tell you," she said.

"What about?"

"You 're to see my cousin to-day at two o'clock."

"The Duke?"

"Yes,—the Duke; and he has got a proposition. I don't know that you need sell your horses, as it seems to make you so very unhappy. You remember Madame Goesler?"

"Of course I do. She was at Harrington."

"There 's something about a legacy which I can't understand at all. It is ever so much money, and it did belong to the old Duke. They say it is to be mine,

—or yours rather, if we should ever be married. And then you know, Gerard, perhaps, after all, you need n't go to Boulogne." So she took her revenge, and he had his as he pressed his arm round her waist and kissed her among the ruins of the old Priory.

Precisely at two to the moment he had his interview with the Duke, and very disagreeable it was to both of them. The Duke was bound to explain that the magnificent present which was being made to his cousin was a gift, not from him, but from Madame Goesler; and, though he was intent on making this as plain as possible, he did not like the task. "The truth is, Mr. Maule, that Madame Goesler is unwilling, for reasons with which I need not trouble you, to take the legacy which was left to her by my uncle. I think her reasons to be insufficient, but it is a matter in which she must, of course, judge for herself. She has decided,—very much, I fear, at my wife's instigation, which I must own I regret,—to give the money to one of our family, and has been pleased to say that my cousin Adelaide shall be the recipient of her bounty. I have nothing to do with it. I cannot stop her generosity if I would, nor can I say that my cousin ought to refuse it. Adelaide will have the entire sum as her fortune, short by the legacy duty, which, as you are probably aware, will be ten per cent., as Madame Goesler was not related to my uncle. The money will, of course, be settled on my cousin and on her children. I believe that will be all I shall have to say, except that Lady Glencora,—the Duchess, I mean,—wishes that Adelaide should be married from our house. If this be so I shall, of course, hope to have the honour of giving my cousin away." The Duke was by no means a pompous man, and prob-

ably there was no man in England of so high rank who thought so little of his rank. But he was stiff and somewhat ungainly, and the task which he was called upon to execute had been very disagreeable to him. He bowed when he had finished his speech, and Gerard Maule felt himself bound to go, almost without expressing his thanks.

"My dear Mr. Maule," said Madame Goesler, "you literally must not say a word to me about it. The money was not mine, and under no circumstances would or could be mine. I have given nothing, and could not have presumed to make such a present. The money, I take it, does undoubtedly belong to the present Duke, and as he does not want it, it is very natural that it should go to his cousin. I trust that you may both live to enjoy it long, but I cannot allow any thanks to be given to me by either of you."

After that he tried the Duchess, who was somewhat more gracious. "The truth is, Mr. Maule, you are a very lucky man to find twenty thousand pounds and more going begging about the country in that way."

"Indeed I am, Duchess."

"And Adelaide is lucky, too, for I doubt whether either of you are given to any very penetrating economies. I am told that you like hunting."

"I have sent my horses to Tattersall's."

"There is enough now for a little hunting, I suppose, unless you have a dozen children. And now you and Adelaide must settle when it 's to be. I hate things to be delayed. People go on quarrelling and fancying this and that, and thinking that the world is full of romance and poetry. When they get married they know better."

"I hope the romance and poetry do not all vanish."

"Romance and poetry are for the most part lies, Mr. Maule, and are very apt to bring people into difficulty. I have seen something of them in my time, and I much prefer downright honest figures. Two and two make four; idleness is the root of all evil; love your neighbour like yourself, and the rest of it. Pray remember that Adelaide is to be married from here, and that we shall be very happy that you should make every use you like of our house until then."

We may so far anticipate in our story as to say that Adelaide Palliser and Gerard Maule were married from Matching Priory at Matching Church early in that October, and that as far as the coming winter was concerned, there certainly was no hunting for the gentleman. They went to Naples instead of Boulogne, and there remained till the warm weather came in the following spring. Nor was that peremptory sale at Tattersall's countermanded as regarded any of the horses. What prices were realised the present writer has never been able to ascertain.

CHAPTER XXIV.

PHINEAS FINN'S SUCCESS.

When Phineas Finn had been about a week at Matching he received a letter, or rather a very short note, from the Prime Minister, asking him to go up to London; and on the same day the Duke of Omnium spoke to him on the subject of the letter. "You are going up to see Mr. Gresham. Mr. Gresham has written to me, and I hope that we shall be able to congratulate ourselves in having your assistance next session." Phineas declared that he had no idea whatever of Mr. Gresham's object in summoning him up to London. "I have his permission to inform you that he wishes you to accept office." Phineas felt that he was becoming very red in the face, but he did not attempt to make any reply on the spur of the moment. "Mr. Gresham thinks it well that so much should be said to you before you see him, in order that you may turn the matter over in your own mind. He would have written to you probably, making the offer at once, had it not been that there must be various changes, and that one man's place must depend on another. You will go, I suppose."

"Yes; I shall go, certainly. I shall be in London this evening."

"I will take care that a carriage is ready for you. I do not presume to advise, Mr. Finn, but I hope that there need be no doubt as to your joining us." Phin-

eas was somewhat confounded, and did not know the Duke well enough to give expression to his thoughts at the moment. "Of course you will return to us, Mr. Finn." Phineas said that he would return and trespass on the Duke's hospitality for yet a few days. He was quite resolved that something must be said to Madame Goesler before he left the roof under which she was living. In the course of the autumn she purposed, as she had told him, to go to Vienna, and to remain there almost up to Christmas. Whatever there might be to be said should be said at any rate before that.

He did speak a few words to her before his journey to London, but in those words there was no allusion made to the great subject which must be discussed between them. "I am going up to London," he said.

"So the Duchess tells me."

"Mr. Gresham has sent for me,—meaning, I suppose, to offer me the place which he would not give me while that poor man was alive."

"And you will accept it, of course, Mr. Finn?"

"I am not at all so sure of that."

"But you will. You must. You will hardly be so foolish as to let the peevish animosity of an ill-conditioned man prejudice your prospects even after his death."

"It will not be any remembrance of Mr. Bonteen that will induce me to refuse."

"It will be the same thing;—rancour against Mr. Gresham because he had allowed the other man's counsel to prevail with him. The action of no individual man should be to you of sufficient consequence to guide your conduct. If you accept office, you should not take it as a favour conferred by the Prime

Minister; nor if you refuse it, should you do so from personal feelings in regard to him. If he selects you he is presumed to do so because he finds that your services will be valuable to the country."

"He does so because he thinks that I should be safe to vote for him."

"That may be so, or not. You can't read his bosom quite distinctly;—but you may read your own. If you go into office you become the servant of the country,—not his servant, and should assume his motive in selecting you to be the same as your own in submitting to the selection. Your foot must be on the ladder before you can get to the top of it."

"The ladder is so crooked."

"Is it more crooked now than it was three years ago;—worse than it was six months ago, when you and all your friends looked upon it as certain that you would be employed? There is nothing, Mr. Finn, that a man should fear so much as some twist in his convictions arising from a personal accident to himself. When we heard that the devil in his sickness wanted to be a monk, we never thought that he would become a saint in glory. When a man who has been rejected by a lady expresses a generally ill opinion of the sex, we are apt to ascribe his opinions to disappointment rather than to judgment. A man falls and breaks his leg at a fence, and cannot be induced to ride again,—not because he thinks the amusement to be dangerous, but because he cannot keep his mind from dwelling on the hardship that has befallen himself. In all such cases self-consciousness gets the better of the judgment."

"You think it will be so with me?"

"I shall think so if you now refuse,—because of the

misfortune which befell you,—that which I know you were most desirous of possessing before that accident. To tell you the truth, Mr. Finn, I wish Mr. Gresham had delayed his offer till the winter."

"And why?"

"Because by that time you will have recovered your health. Your mind now is morbid and out of tune."

"There was something to make it so, Madame Goesler."

"God knows there was; and the necessity which lay upon you of bearing a bold front during those long and terrible weeks of course consumed your strength. The wonder is that the fibres of your mind should have retained any of their elasticity after such an ordeal. But as you are so strong, it would be a pity that you should not be strong altogether. This thing that is now to be offered to you is what you have always desired."

"A man may have always desired that which is worthless."

"You tried it once, and did not find it worthless. You found yourself able to do good work when you were in office. If I remember right, you did not give it up then because it was irksome to you, or contemptible, or, as you say, worthless; but from difference of opinion on some political question. You can always do that again."

"A man is not fit for office who is prone to do so."

"Then do not you be prone. It means success or failure in the profession which you have chosen, and I shall greatly regret to see you damage your chance of success by yielding to scruples which have come upon you when you are hardly as yet yourself."

She had spoken to him very plainly, and he had found it to be impossible to answer her, and yet she had hardly touched the motives by which he believed himself to be actuated. As he made his journey up to London he thought very much of her words. There had been nothing said between them about money. No allusion had been made to the salary of the office which would be offered to him, or to the terrible shortness of his own means of living. He knew well enough himself that he must take some final step in life, or very shortly return into absolute obscurity. This woman who had been so strongly advising him to take a certain course as to his future life was very rich;—and he had fully decided that he would sooner or later ask her to be his wife. He knew well that all her friends regarded their marriage as certain. The Duchess had almost told him so in as many words. Lady Chiltern, who was much more to him than the Duchess, had assured him that if he should have a wife to bring with him to Harrington, the wife would be welcome. Of what other wife could Lady Chiltern have thought? Laurence Fitzgibbon, when congratulated on his own marriage, had returned counter congratulations. Mr. Low had said that it would of course come to pass. Even Mrs. Bunce had hinted at it, suggesting that she would lose her lodger and be a wretched woman. All the world had heard of the journey to Prague, and all the world expected the marriage. And he had come to love the woman with excessive affection, day by day, ever since the renewal of their intimacy at Broughton Spinnies. His mind was quite made up;—but he was by no means so sure of her mind as the rest of the world might be. He knew of her, what nobody else

in all the world knew,—except himself. In that former period of his life, on which he now sometimes looked back as though it had been passed in another world, this woman had offered her hand and fortune to him. She had done so in the enthusiasm of her love, knowing his ambition and knowing his poverty, and believing that her wealth was necessary to the success of his career in life. He had refused the offer,—and they had parted without a word. Now they had come together again, and she was certainly among the dearest of his friends. Had she not taken that wondrous journey to Prague in his behalf, and been the first among those who had striven,—and had striven at last successfully,—to save his neck from the halter? Dear to her! He knew well as he sat with his eyes closed in the railway carriage that he must be dear to her! But might it not well be that she had resolved that friendship should take the place of love? And was it not compatible with her nature,—with all human nature,—that in spite of her regard for him she should choose to be revenged for the evil which had befallen her, when she offered her hand in vain? She must know by this time that he intended to throw himself at her feet; and would hardly have advised him as she had done as to the necessity of following up that success which had hitherto been so essential to him, had she intended to give him all that she had once offered him before. It might well be that Lady Chiltern, and even the Duchess, should be mistaken. Marie Goesler was not a woman, he thought, to reveal the deeper purposes of her life to any such friend as the Duchess of Omnium.

Of his own feelings in regard to the offer which was about to be made to him he had hardly succeeded in

making her understand anything. That a change had come upon himself was certain, but he did not at all believe that it had sprung from any weakness caused by his sufferings in regard to the murder. He rather believed that he had become stronger than weaker from all that he had endured. He had learned when he was younger,—some years back,—to regard the political service of his country as a profession in which a man possessed of certain gifts might earn his bread with more gratification to himself than in any other. The work would be hard, and the emolument only intermittent; but the service would in itself be pleasant; and the rewards of that service,—should he be so successful as to obtain reward,—would be dearer to him than anything which could accrue to him from other labours. To sit in the Cabinet for one session would, he then thought, be more to him than to preside over the Court of Queen's Bench as long as did Lord Mansfield. But during the last few months a change had crept across his dream,—which he recognised but could hardly analyse. He had seen a man whom he despised promoted, and the place to which the man had been exalted had at once become contemptible in his eyes. And there had been quarrels and jangling, and the speaking of evil words between men who should have been quiet and dignified. No doubt Madame Goesler was right in attributing the revulsion in his hopes to Mr. Bonteen and Mr. Bonteen's enmity; but Phineas Finn himself did not know that it was so.

He arrived in town in the evening, and his appointment with Mr. Gresham was for the following morning. He breakfasted at his club, and there he received the following letter from Lady Laura Kennedy:—

"Saulsby, 28th August, 18—.

"My dear Phineas,—I have just received a letter from Barrington in which he tells me that Mr. Gresham is going to offer you your old place at the Colonies. He says that now Fawn has been so upset by this affair of Lady Eustace's husband, that he is obliged to resign and go abroad." This was the first intimation that Phineas had heard of the nature of the office to be offered to him. "But Barrington goes on to say that he thinks you won't accept Mr. Gresham's offer, and he asks me to write to you. Can this possibly be true? Barrington writes most kindly,—with true friendship, —and is most anxious for you to join. But he thinks that you are angry with Mr. Gresham because he passed you over before, and that you will not forgive him for having yielded to Mr. Bonteen. I can hardly believe this possible. Surely you will not allow the shade of that unfortunate man to blight your prospects? And, after all, of what matter to you is the friendship or enmity of Mr. Gresham? You have to assert yourself, to make your own way, to use your own opportunities, and to fight your own battle without reference to the feelings of individuals. Men act together in office constantly, and with constancy, who are known to hate each other. Where there are so many to get what is going, and so little to be given, of course there will be struggling and trampling. I have no doubt that Lord Cantrip has made a point of this with Mr. Gresham;—has, in point of fact, insisted upon it. If so, you are lucky to have such an ally as Lord Cantrip. He and Mr. Gresham are, as you know, sworn friends, and if you get on well with the one you certainly may with the other also. Pray do not refuse without ask-

ing for time to think about it;—and if so, pray come here, that you may consult my father.

"I spent two weary weeks at Loughlinter, and then could stand it no longer. I have come here, and here I shall remain for the autumn and winter. If I can sell my interest in the Loughlinter property I shall do so, as I am sure that neither the place nor the occupation is fit for me. Indeed I know not what place or what occupation will suit me! The dreariness of the life before me is hardly preferable to the disappointments I have already endured. There seems to be nothing left for me but to watch my father to the end. The world would say that such a duty in life is fit for a widowed childless daughter; but to you I cannot pretend to say that my bereavements or misfortunes reconcile me to such a fate. I cannot cease to remember my age, my ambition, and I will say, my love. I suppose that everything is over for me,—as though I were an old woman, going down into the grave, but at my time of life I find it hard to believe that it must be so. And then the time of waiting may be so long! I suppose I could start a house in London, and get people around me by feeding and flattering them, and by little intrigues,—like that woman of whom you are so fond. It is money that is chiefly needed for that work, and of money I have enough now. And people would know at any rate who I am. But I could not flatter them, and I should wish the food to choke them if they did not please me. And you would not come, and if you did,—I may as well say it boldly,—others would not. An ill-natured sprite has been busy with me, which seems to deny me everything which is so freely granted to others.

"As for you, the world is at your feet. I dread two things for you,—that you should marry unworthily, and that you should injure your prospects in public life by an uncompromising stiffness. On the former subject I can say nothing to you. As to the latter, let me implore you to come down here before you decide upon anything. Of course you can at once accept Mr. Gresham's offer; and that is what you should do unless the office proposed to you be unworthy of you. No friend of yours will think that your old place at the Colonies should be rejected. But if your mind is still turned towards refusing, ask Mr. Gresham to give you three or four days for decision, and then come here. He cannot refuse you,—nor, after all that is passed, can you refuse me.

"Yours affectionately,

"L. K."

When he had read this letter he at once acknowledged to himself that he could not refuse her request. He must go to Saulsby, and he must do so at once. He was about to see Mr. Gresham immediately,—within half an hour; and as he could not expect at the most above twenty-four hours to be allowed to him for consideration, he must go down to Saulsby on the same evening. As he walked to the Prime Minister's house he called at a telegraph office and sent down his message. "I will be at Saulsby by the train arriving at 7 P.M. Send to meet me." Then he went on, and in a few minutes found himself in the presence of the great man.

The great man received him with an excellent courtesy. It is the special business of Prime Ministers

to be civil in detail, though roughness, and perhaps almost rudeness in the gross, becomes not unfrequently a necessity of their position. To a proposed incoming subordinate a Prime Minister is, of course, very civil, and to a retreating subordinate he is generally more so,—unless the retreat be made under unfavourable circumstances. And to give good things is always pleasant, unless there be a suspicion that the good thing will be thought to be not good enough. No such suspicion as that now crossed the mind of Mr. Gresham. He had been pressed very much by various colleagues to admit this young man into the Paradise of his Government, and had been pressed very much also to exclude him; and this had been continued till he had come to dislike the name of the young man. He did believe that the young man had behaved badly to Mr. Robert Kennedy, and he knew that the young man on one occasion had taken to kicking in harness, and running a course of his own. He had decided against the young man,—very much no doubt at the instance of Mr. Bonteen,—and he believed that in so doing he closed the gates of Paradise against a Peri most anxious to enter it. He now stood with the key in his hand and the gate open,—and the seat to be allotted to the re-accepted one was that which he believed the Peri would most gratefully fill. He began by making a little speech about Mr. Bonteen. That was almost unavoidable. And he praised in glowing words the attitude which Phineas had maintained during the trial. He had been delighted with the re-election at Tankerville, and thought that the borough had done itself much honour. Then came forth his prop-

osition. Lord Fawn had retired, absolutely broken down by repeated examinations respecting the man in the grey coat, and the office which Phineas had before held with so much advantage to the public, and comfort to his immediate chief Lord Cantrip, was there for his acceptance. Mr. Gresham went on to express an ardent hope that he might have the benefit of Mr. Finn's services. It was quite manifest from his manner that he did not in the least doubt the nature of the reply which he would receive.

Phineas had come primed with his answer,—so ready with it that it did not even seem to be the result of any hesitation at the moment. "I hope, Mr. Gresham, that you will be able to give me a few hours to think of this." Mr. Gresham's face fell, for, in truth, he wanted an immediate answer; and though he knew from experience that secretaries of State, and first lords, and chancellors, do demand time, and will often drive very hard bargains before they will consent to get into harness, he considered that under-secretaries, junior lords, and the like, should skip about as they were bidden, and take the crumbs offered them without delay. If every underling wanted a few hours to think about it, how could any Government ever be got together? "I am sorry to put you to inconvenience," continued Phineas, seeing that the great man was but ill-satisfied, "but I am so placed that I cannot avail myself of your flattering kindness without some little time for consideration."

"I had hoped that the office was one which you would like."

"So it is, Mr. Gresham."

"And I was told that you are now free from any scruples,—political scruples, I mean,—which might make it difficult for you to support the Government."

"Since the Government came to our way of thinking,—a year or two ago,—about Tenant Right I mean,—I do not know that there is any subject on which I am likely to oppose it. Perhaps I had better tell you the truth, Mr. Gresham."

"Oh, certainly," said the Prime Minister, who knew very well that on such occasions nothing could be worse than the telling of disagreeable truths.

"When you came into office, after beating Mr. Daubeny on the Church question, no man in Parliament was more desirous of place than I was,—and I am sure that none of the disappointed ones felt their disappointment so keenly. It was aggravated by various circumstances,—by calumnies in newspapers, and by personal bickerings. I need not go into that wretched story of Mr. Bonteen, and the absurd accusation which grew out of those calumnies. These things have changed me very much. I have a feeling that I have been ill-used,—not by you, Mr. Gresham, specially, but by the party; and I look upon the whole question of office with altered eyes."

"In filling up the places at his disposal a Prime Minister, Mr. Finn, has a most unenviable task."

"I can well believe it."

"When circumstances, rather than any selection of his own, indicate the future occupant of any office, this abrogation of his patronage is the greatest blessing in the world to him."

"I can believe that also."

"I wish it were so with every office under the Crown.

A Minister is rarely thanked, and would as much look for the peace of heaven in his office as for gratitude."

"I am sorry that I should have made no exception to such thanklessness."

"We shall neither of us get on by complaining;—shall we, Mr. Finn? You can let me have an answer perhaps by this time to-morrow."

"If an answer by telegraph will be sufficient."

"Quite sufficient. Yes or no. Nothing more will be wanted. You understand your own reasons, no doubt, fully; but if they were stated at length they would perhaps hardly enlighten me. Good morning." Then as Phineas was turning his back, the Prime Minister remembered that it behoved him as Prime Minister to repress his temper. "I shall still hope, Mr. Finn, for a favourable answer." Had it not been for that last word Phineas would have turned again, and at once rejected the proposition.

From Mr. Gresham's house he went by appointment to Mr. Monk's, and told him of the interview. Mr. Monk's advice to him had been exactly the same as that given by Madame Goesler and Lady Laura. Phineas, indeed, understood perfectly that no friends could or would give him any other advice. "He has his troubles, too," said Mr. Monk, speaking of the Prime Minister.

"A man can hardly expect to hold such an office without trouble."

"Labour of course there must be,—though I doubt whether it is so great as that of some other persons;—and responsibility. The amount of trouble depends on the spirit and nature of the man. Do you remember old Lord Brock? He was never troubled. He

had a triple shield,—a thick skin, an equable temper, and perfect self-confidence. Mr. Mildmay was of a softer temper, and would have suffered had he not been protected by the idolatry of a large class of his followers. Mr. Gresham has no such protection. With a finer intellect than either, and a sense of patriotism quite as keen, he has a self-consciousness which makes him sore at every point. He knows the frailty of his temper, and yet cannot control it. And he does not understand men as did these others. Every word from an enemy is a wound to him. Every slight from a friend is a dagger in his side. But I can fancy that self-accusations make the cross on which he is really crucified. He is a man to whom I would extend all my mercy, were it in my power to be merciful."

"You will hardly tell me that I should accept office under him by way of obliging him."

"Were I you I should do so,—not to oblige him, but because I know him to be an honest man."

"I care but little for honesty," said Phineas, "which is at the disposal of those who are dishonest. What am I to think of a Minister who could allow himself to be led by Mr. Bonteen?"

CHAPTER XXV.

THE LAST VISIT TO SAULSBY.

Phineas, as he journeyed down to Saulsby, knew that he had in truth made up his mind. He was going thither nominally that he might listen to the advice of almost his oldest political friend before he resolved on a matter of vital importance to himself; but in truth he was making the visit because he felt that he could not excuse himself from it without unkindness and ingratitude. She had implored him to come, and he was bound to go, and there were tidings to be told which he must tell. It was not only that he might give her his reasons for not becoming an under-secretary of State that he went to Saulsby. He felt himself bound to inform her that he intended to ask Marie Goesler to be his wife. He might omit to do so till he had asked the question,—and then say nothing of what he had done should his petition be refused; but it seemed to him that there would be cowardice in this. He was bound to treat Lady Laura as his friend in a special degree, as something more than his sister,—and he was bound above all things to make her understand in some plainest manner that she could be nothing more to him than such a friend. In his dealings with her he had endeavoured always to be honest,—gentle as well as honest; but now it was specially his duty to be honest to her. When he was young he had loved her, and had told her so,—and she had refused him.

As a friend he had been true to her ever since, but that offer could never be repeated. And the other offer,—to the woman whom she was now accustomed to abuse,—must be made. Should Lady Laura choose to quarrel with him it must be so: but the quarrel should not be of his seeking.

He was quite sure that he would refuse Mr. Gresham's offer, although by doing so he would himself throw away the very thing which he had devoted his life to acquire. In a foolish, soft moment,—as he now confessed to himself,—he had endeavoured to obtain for his own position the sympathy of the Minister. He had spoken of the calumnies which had hurt him, and of his sufferings when he found himself excluded from place in consequence of the evil stories which had been told of him. Mr. Gresham had, in fact, declined to listen to him;—had said that yes or no was all that he required, and had gone on to explain that he would be unable to understand the reasons proposed to be given even were he to hear them. Phineas had felt himself to be repulsed, and would at once have shown his anger, had not the Prime Minister silenced him for the moment by a civilly worded repetition of the offer made.

But the offer should certainly be declined. As he told himself that it must be so, he endeavoured to analyse the causes of this decision, but was hardly successful. He had thought that he could explain the reasons to the Minister, but found himself incapable of explaining them to himself. In regard to means of subsistence he was no better off now than when he began the world. He was, indeed, without incumbrance, but was also without any means of procuring an in-

come. For the last twelve months he had been living on his little capital, and two years more of such life would bring him to the end of all that he had. There was, no doubt, one view of his prospects which was bright enough. If Marie Goesler accepted him, he need not, at any rate, look about for the means of earning a living. But he assured himself with perfect confidence that no hope in that direction would have any influence upon the answer he would give to Mr. Gresham. Had not Marie Goesler herself been most urgent with him in begging him to accept the offer; and was he not therefore justified in concluding that she at least had thought it necessary that he should earn his bread? Would her heart be softened towards him,—would any further softening be necessary,—by his obstinate refusal to comply with her advice? The two things had no reference to each other,—and should be regarded by him as perfectly distinct. He would refuse Mr. Gresham's offer,—not because he hoped that he might live in idleness on the wealth of the woman he loved,—but because the chicaneries and intrigues of office had become distasteful to him. "I don't know which are the falser," he said to himself, "the mock courtesies or the mock indignations of statesmen."

He found the Earl's carriage waiting for him at the station, and thought of many former days, as he was carried through the little town for which he had sat in Parliament, up to the house which he had once visited in the hope of wooing Violet Effingham. The women whom he had loved had all, at any rate, become his friends, and his thorough friendships were almost all with women. He and Lord Chiltern regarded each

other with warm affection; but there was hardly ground for real sympathy between them. It was the same with Mr. Low and Barrington Erle. Were he to die there would be no gap in their lives;—were they to die there would be none in his. But with Violet Effingham,—as he still loved to call her to himself,—he thought it would be different. When the carriage stopped at the hall door he was thinking of her rather than of Lady Laura Kennedy.

He was shown at once to his bedroom,—the very room in which he had written the letter to Lord Chiltern which had brought about the duel at Blankenberg. He was told that he would find Lady Laura in the drawing-room waiting for dinner for him. The Earl had already dined.

"I am so glad you are come," said Lady Laura, welcoming him. "Papa is not very well and dined early, but I have waited for you, of course. Of course I have. You did not suppose I would let you sit down alone? I would not see you before you dressed because I knew that you must be tired and hungry, and that the sooner you got down the better. Has it not been hot?"

"And so dusty! I only left Matching yesterday, and seem to have been on the railway ever since."

"Government officials have to take frequent journeys, Mr. Finn. How long will it be before you have to go down to Scotland twice in one week, and back as often, to form a ministry? Your next journey must be into the dining-room;—in making which will you give me your arm?"

She was, he thought, lighter in heart and pleasanter in manner than she had been since her return from

Dresden. When she had made her little joke about his future ministerial duties the servant had been in the room, and he had not, therefore, stopped her by a serious answer. And now she was solicitous about his dinner,—anxious that he should enjoy the good things set before him, as is the manner of loving women, pressing him to take wine, and playing the good hostess in all things. He smiled, and ate, and drank, and was gracious under her petting; but he had a weight on his bosom, knowing, as he did, that he must say that before long which would turn all her playfulness either to anger or to grief. "And who had you at Matching?" she asked.

"Just the usual set."

"Minus the poor old Duke?"

"Yes; minus the old Duke, certainly. The greatest change is in the name. Lady Glencora was so specially Lady Glencora that she ought to have been Lady Glencora to the end. Everybody calls her Duchess, but it does not sound half so nice."

"And is he altered?"

"Not in the least. You can trace the lines of lingering regret upon his countenance when people begrace him; but that is all. There was always about him a simple dignity which made it impossible that any one should slap him on the back; and that of course remains. He is the same Planty Pall; but I doubt whether any man ever ventured to call him Planty Pall to his face since he left Eton."

"The house was full, I suppose?"

"There were a great many there; among others Sir Gregory Grogram, who apologised to me for having tried to—put an end to my career."

"Oh, Phineas!"

"And Sir Harry Coldfoot, who seemed to take some credit to himself for having allowed the jury to acquit me. And Chiltern and his wife were there for a day or two."

"What could take Oswald there?"

"An embassy of State about the foxes. The Duke's property runs into his country. She is one of the best women that ever lived."

"Violet?"

"And one of the best wives."

"She ought to be, for she is one of the happiest. What can she wish for that she has not got? Was your great friend there?"

He knew well what great friend she meant. "Madame Max Goesler was there."

"I suppose so. I never can quite forgive Lady Glencora for her intimacy with that woman."

"Do not abuse her, Lady Laura."

"I do not intend,—not to you at any rate. But I can better understand that she should receive the admiration of a gentleman than the affectionate friendship of a lady. That the old Duke should have been infatuated was intelligible."

"She was very good to the old Duke."

"But it was a kind of goodness which was hardly likely to recommend itself to his nephew's wife. Never mind; we won't talk about her now. Barrington was there?"

"For a day or two."

"He seems to be wasting his life."

"Subordinates in office generally do, I think."

"Do not say that, Phineas."

"Some few push through, and one can almost always foretell who the few will be. There are men who are destined always to occupy second-rate places, and who seem also to know their fate. I never heard Erle speak even of an ambition to sit in the Cabinet."

"He likes to be useful."

"All that part of the business which distresses me is pleasant to him. He is fond of arrangements, and delights in little party successes. Either to effect or to avoid a count-out is a job of work to his taste, and he loves to get the better of the opposition by keeping it in the dark. A successful plot is as dear to him as to a writer of plays. And yet he is never bitter as is Rattler, or unscrupulous as was poor Mr. Bonteen, or full of wrath as is Lord Fawn. Nor is he idle like Fitzgibbon. Erle always earns his salary."

"When I said he was wasting his life, I meant that he did not marry. But perhaps a man in his position had better remain unmarried." Phineas tried to laugh, but hardly succeeded well. "That, however, is a delicate subject, and we will not touch it now. If you won't drink any wine we might as well go into the other room."

Nothing had as yet been said on either of the subjects which had brought him to Saulsby, but there had been words which made the introduction of them peculiarly unpleasant. His tidings, however, must be told. "I shall not see Lord Brentford to-night?" he asked, when they were together in the drawing-room.

"If you wish it, you can go up to him. He will not come down."

"Oh no. It is only because I must return to-morrow."

"To-morrow, Phineas!"

"I must do so. I have pledged myself to see Mr. Monk,—and others also."

"It is a short visit to make to us on my first return home! I hardly expected you at Loughlinter, but I thought that you might have remained a few nights under my father's roof." He could only reassert his assurance that he was bound to be back in London, and explain as best he might that he had come to Saulsby for a single night, only because he would not refuse her request to him. "I will not trouble you, Phineas, by complaints," she said.

"I would give you no cause for complaint if I could avoid it."

"And now tell me what has passed between you and Mr. Gresham," she said, as soon as the servant had given them coffee. They were sitting by a window which opened down to the ground, and led on to the terrace and to the lawns below. The night was soft, and the air was heavy with the scent of many flowers. It was now past nine, and the sun had set; but there was a bright harvest moon, and the light, though pale, was clear as that of day. "Will you come and take a turn round the garden? We shall be better there than sitting here. I will get my hat; can I find yours for you?" So they both strolled out, down the terrace steps, and went forth, beyond the gardens, into the park, as though they had both intended from the first that it should be so. "I know you have not accepted Mr. Gresham's offer, or you would have told me so."

"I have not accepted."

"Nor have you refused?"

"No; it is still open. I must send my answer by

telegram to-morrow—yes or no,—Mr. Gresham's time is too precious to admit of more."

"Phineas, for Heaven's sake do not allow little feelings to injure you at such a time as this. It is of your own career, not of Mr. Gresham's manners, that you should think."

"I have nothing to object to in Mr. Gresham. Yes or no will be quite sufficient."

"It must be yes."

"It cannot be yes, Lady Laura. That which I desired so ardently six months ago has now become so distasteful to me that I cannot accept it. There is an amount of hustling on the Treasury Bench which makes a seat there almost ignominious."

"Do they hustle more than they did three years ago?"

"I think they do, or if not it is more conspicuous to my eyes. I do not say that it need be ignominious. To such a one as was Mr. Palliser it certainly is not so. But it becomes so when a man goes there to get his bread, and has to fight his way as though for bare life. When office first comes, unasked for, almost unexpected, full of the charms which distance lends, it is pleasant enough. The new-comer begins to feel that he too is entitled to rub his shoulders among those who rule the world of Great Britain. But when it has been expected, longed for as I longed for it, asked for by my friends and refused, when all the world comes to know that you are a suitor for that which should come without any suit,—then the pleasantness vanishes."

"I thought it was to be your career."

"And I hoped so."

"What will you do, Phineas? You cannot live without an income."

"I must try," he said, laughing.

"You will not share with your friend, as a friend should."

"No, Lady Laura. That cannot be done."

"I do not see why it cannot. Then you might be independent."

"Then I should indeed be dependent."

"You are too proud to owe me anything."

He wanted to tell her that he was too proud to owe such obligation as she had suggested to any man or any woman; but he hardly knew how to do so, intending as he did to inform her before they returned to the house of his intention to ask Madame Goesler to be his wife. He could discern the difference between enjoying his wife's fortune and taking gifts of money from one who was bound to him by no tie;—but to her in her present mood he could explain no such distinction. On a sudden he rushed at the matter in his mind. It had to be done and must be done before he brought her back to the house. He was conscious that he had in no degree ill-used her. He had in nothing deceived her. He had kept back from her nothing which the truest friendship had called upon him to reveal to her. And yet he knew that her indignation would rise hot within her at his first word. "Laura," he said, forgetting in his confusion to remember her rank, "I had better tell you at once that I have determined to ask Madame Goesler to be my wife."

"Oh, then;—of course your income is certain."

"If you choose to regard my conduct in that light I cannot help it. I do not think that I deserve such reproach."

"Why not tell it all? You are engaged to her?"

"Not so. I have not asked her yet."

"And why do you come to me with the story of your intentions,—to me of all persons in the world? I sometimes think that of all the hearts that ever dwelt within a man's bosom yours is the hardest."

"For God's sake do not say that of me."

"Do you remember when you came to me about Violet,—to me,—to me? I could bear it then because she was good and earnest, and a woman that I could love even though she robbed me. And I strove for you even against my own heart,—against my own brother. I did; I did. But how am I to bear it now? What shall I do now? She is a woman I loathe."

"Because you do not know her."

"Not know her! And are your eyes so clear at seeing that you must know her better than others? She was the Duke's mistress."

"That is untrue, Lady Laura."

"But what difference does it make to me? I shall be sure that you will have bread to eat, and horses to ride, and a seat in Parliament without being forced to earn it by your labour. We shall meet no more, of course."

"I do not think that you can mean that."

"I will never receive that woman, nor will I cross the sill of her door. Why should I?"

"Should she become my wife—that, I would have thought, might have been the reason why."

"Surely, Phineas, no man ever understood a woman so ill as you do."

"Because I would fain hope that I need not quarrel with my oldest friend?"

"Yes, sir; because you think you can do this without quarrelling. How should I speak to her of you; how listen to what she would tell me? Phineas, you have killed me at last." Why could he not tell her that it was she who had done the wrong when she gave her hand to Robert Kennedy? But he could not tell her, and he was dumb. "And so it 's settled!"

"No; not settled."

"Psha! I hate your mock modesty! It is settled. You have become far too cautious to risk fortune in such an adventure. Practice has taught you to be perfect. It was to tell me this that you came down here."

"Partly so."

"It would have been more generous of you, sir, to have remained away."

"I did not mean to be ungenerous."

Then she suddenly turned upon him, throwing her arms round his neck, and burying her face upon his bosom. They were at the moment in the centre of the park, on the grass beneath the trees, and the moon was bright over their heads. He held her to his breast while she sobbed, and then relaxed his hold as she raised herself to look into his face. After a moment she took his hat from his head with one hand, and with the other swept the hair back from his brow. "Oh, Phineas," she said; "Oh, my darling! My idol that I have worshipped when I should have worshipped my God!"

After that they roamed for nearly an hour backwards and forwards beneath the trees, till at last she became calm and almost reasonable. She acknowledged that she had long expected such a marriage, looking for-

ward to it as a great sorrow. She repeated over and over again her assertion that she could not "know" Madame Goesler as the wife of Phineas, but abstained from further evil words respecting the lady. "It is better that we should be apart," she said at last. "I feel that it is better. When we are both old, if I should live, we may meet again. I knew that it was coming, and we had better part." And yet they remained out there, wandering about the park for a long portion of the summer night. She did not reproach him again, nor did she speak much of the future; but she alluded to all the incidents of their past life, showing him that nothing which he had done, no words which he had spoken, had been forgotten by her. "Of course it has been my fault," she said, as at last she parted with him in the drawing-room. "When I was younger I did not understand how strong the heart can be. I should have known it, and I pay for my ignorance with the penalty of my whole life." Then he left her, kissing her on both cheeks and on her brow, and went to his bedroom with the understanding that he would start for London on the following morning before she was up.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"AT LAST, AT LAST!"

As he took his ticket, Phineas sent his message to the Prime Minister, taking that personage literally at his word. The message was, no. When writing it in the office it seeemd to him to be uncourteous, but he found it difficult to add any other words that should make it less so. He supplemented it with a letter on his arrival in London, in which he expressed his regret that certain circumstances of his life which had occurred during the last month or two made him unfit to undertake the duties of the very pleasant office to which Mr. Gresham had kindly offered to appoint him. That done, he remained in town but one night, and then set his face again towards Matching. When he reached that place it was already known that he had refused to accept Mr. Gresham's offer, and he was met at once with regrets and condolements. "I am sorry that it must be so," said the Duke,—who was sorry, for he liked the man, but who said not a word more upon the subject. "You are still young, and will have further opportunities," said Lord Cantrip, "but I wish that you could have consented to come back to your old chair." "I hope that at any rate we shall not have you against us," said Sir Harry Coldfoot. Among themselves they declared one to another that he had been so completely upset by his imprisonment and subsequent trial as to

be unable to undertake the work proposed to him. "It is not a very nice thing, you know, to be accused of murder," said Sir Gregory, "and to pass a month or two under the full conviction that you are going to be hung. He 'll come right again some day. I only hope it may not be too late."

"So you have decided for freedom?" said Madame Goesler to him that evening,—the evening of the day on which he had returned.

"Yes, indeed."

"I have nothing to say against your decision now. No doubt your feelings have prompted you right."

"Now that it is done, of course I am full of regrets," said Phineas.

"That is simple human nature, I suppose."

"Simple enough; and the worst of it is that I cannot quite explain even to myself why I have done it. Every friend I had in the world told me that I was wrong, and yet I could not help myself. The thing was offered to me, not because I was thought to be fit for it, but because I had become wonderful by being brought near to a violent death! I remember once, when I was a child, having a rocking-horse given to me because I had fallen from the top of the house to the bottom without breaking my neck. The rocking-horse was very well then, but I don't care now to have one bestowed upon me for any such reason."

"Still, if the rocking-horse is in itself a good rocking-horse——"

"But it is n't."

"I don't mean to say a word against your decision."

"It is n't good. It is one of those toys which look to be so very desirable in the shop-windows, but which

give no satisfaction when they are brought home. I 'll tell you what occurred the other day. The circumstances happen to be known to me, though I cannot tell you my authority. My dear old friend Laurence Fitzgibbon, in the performance of his official duties, had to give an opinion on a matter affecting an expenditure of some thirty or forty thousand pounds of public money. I don't think that Laurence has generally a very strong bias this way or that on such questions, but in the case in question he took upon himself to be very decided. He wrote, or got some one to write, a report proving that the service of the country imperatively demanded that the money should be spent, and in doing so was strictly within his duty."

"I am glad to hear that he can be so energetic."

"The Chancellor of the Exchequer got hold of the matter, and told Fitzgibbon that the thing could n't be done."

"That was all right and constitutional, I suppose."

"Quite right and constitutional. But something had to be said about it in the House, and Laurence, with all his usual fluency and beautiful Irish brogue, got up and explained that the money would be absolutely thrown away if expended on a purpose so futile as that proposed. I am assured that the great capacity which he has thus shown for official work and official life will cover a multitude of sins."

"You would hardly have taken Mr. Fitzgibbon as your model statesman."

"Certainly not;—and if the story affected him only it would hardly be worth telling. But the point of it lies in this;—that he disgusted no one by what he did. The Chancellor of the Exchequer thinks him a very

convenient man to have about him, and Mr. Gresham feels the comfort of possessing tools so pliable."

"Do you think that public life then is altogether a mistake, Mr. Finn?"

"For a poor man I think that it is in this country. A man of fortune may be independent; and because he has the power of independence those who are higher than he will not expect him to be subservient. A man who takes to parliamentary office for a living may live by it, but he will have but a dog's life of it."

"If I were you, Mr. Finn, I certainly would not choose a dog's life."

He said not a word to her on that occasion about herself, having made up his mind that a certain period of the following day should be chosen for the purpose, and he had hardly yet arranged in his mind what words he would use on that occasion. It seemed to him that there would be so much to be said that he must settle beforehand some order of saying it. It was not as though he had merely to tell her of his love. There had been talk of love between them before, on which occasion he had been compelled to tell her that he could not accept that which she offered to him. It would be impossible, he knew, not to refer to that former conversation. And then he had to tell her that he, now coming to her as a suitor and knowing her to be a very rich woman, was himself all but penniless. He was sure, or almost sure, that she was as well aware of this fact as he was himself; but, nevertheless, it was necessary that he should tell her of it,—and if possible, so tell her as to force her to believe him when he assured her that he asked her to be his wife, not because she was rich, but because he loved her. It was impossible

that all this should be said as they sat side by side in the drawing-room with a crowd of people almost within hearing, and Madame Goesler had just been called upon to play, which she always did directly she was asked. He was invited to make up a rubber, but he could not bring himself to care for cards at the present moment. So he sat apart and listened to the music.

If all things went right with him to-morrow that music,—or the musician who made it,—would be his own for the rest of his life. Was he justified in expecting that she would give him so much? Of her great regard for him as a friend he had no doubt. She had shown it in various ways, and after a fashion that had made it known to all the world. But so had Lady Laura regarded him when he first told her of his love at Loughlinter. She had been his dearest friend, but she had declined to become his wife; and it had been partly so with Violet Effingham, whose friendship to him had been so sweet as to make him for a while almost think that there was more than friendship. Marie Goesler had certainly once loved him;—but so had he once loved Laura Standish. He had been wretched for a while because Lady Laura had refused him. His feelings now were altogether changed, and why should not the feelings of Madame Goesler have undergone a similar change? There was no doubt of her friendship; but then neither was there any doubt of his for Lady Laura. And in spite of her friendship would not revenge be dear to her,—revenge of that nature which a slighted woman must always desire? He had rejected her, and would it not be fair also that he should be rejected? "I suppose you 'll be in your own room before lunch to-morrow," he said to her as

"Oh, Phineas; — at last, at last!"

they separated for the night. It had come to pass from the constancy of her visits to Matching in the old Duke's time, that a certain small morning-room had been devoted to her, and this was still supposed to be her property,—so that she was not driven to herd with the public or to remain in her bedroom during all the hours of the morning. "Yes," she said; "I shall go out immediately after breakfast, but I shall soon be driven in by the heat, and then I shall be there till lunch. The Duchess always comes about half-past twelve, to complain generally of the guests." She answered him quite at her ease, making arrangement for privacy if he should desire it, but doing so as though she thought that he wanted to talk to her about his trial, or about politics, or the place he had just refused. Surely she would hardly have answered him after such a fashion had she suspected that he intended to ask her to be his wife.

At a little before noon the next morning he knocked at her door, and was told to enter. "I did n't go out after all," she said. "I had n't courage to face the sun."

"I saw that you were not in the garden."

"If I could have found you I would have told you that I should be here all the morning. I might have sent you a message, only—only I did n't."

"I have come——"

"I know why you have come."

"I doubt that. I have come to tell you that I love you."

"Oh, Phineas;—at last, at last!" And in a moment she was in his arms.

It seemed to him that from that moment all the ex-

planations, and all the statements, and most of the assurances were made by her and not by him. After this first embrace he found himself seated beside her, holding her hand. "I do not know that I am right," said he.

"Why not right?"

"Because you are rich and I have nothing."

"If you ever remind me of that again, I will strike you," she said, raising up her little fist and bringing it down with gentle pressure on his shoulder. "Between you and me there must be nothing more about that. It must be an even partnership. There must be ever so much about money, and you 'll have to go into dreadful details, and make journeys to Vienna to see that the houses don't tumble down;—but there must be no question between you and me of whence it came."

"You will not think that I have come to you for that?"

"Have you ever known me to have a low opinion of myself? Is it probable that I shall account myself to be personally so mean and of so little value as to imagine that you cannot love me? I know you love me. But Phineas, I have not been sure till very lately that you would ever tell me so. As for me——! Oh, heavens! when I think of it."

"Tell me that you love me now."

"I think I have said so plainly enough. I have never ceased to love you since I first knew you well enough for love. And I 'll tell you more,—though perhaps I shall say what you will think condemns me;—you are the only man I ever loved. My husband was very good to me,—and I was, I think, good to him. But he was many years my senior, and I cannot

say I loved him,—as I do you." Then she turned to him, and put her head on his shoulder. "And I loved the old Duke, too, after a fashion. But it was a different thing from this. I will tell you something about him some day that I have never yet told to a human being."

"Tell me now."

"No; not till I am your wife. You must trust me. But I will tell you," she said, "lest you should be miserable. He asked me to be his wife."

"The old Duke?"

"Yes indeed, and I refused to be a—duchess. Lady Glencora knew it all, and, just at the time, I was breaking my heart,—like a fool, for you! Yes, for you! But I got over it, and am not broken-hearted a bit. Oh, Phineas, I am so happy now."

Exactly at the time she had mentioned on the previous evening, at half-past twelve, the door was opened, and the Duchess entered the room. "Oh dear," she exclaimed, "perhaps I am in the way; perhaps I am interrupting secrets."

"No, Duchess."

"Shall I retire? I will at once if there be anything confidential going on."

"It has gone on already, and been completed," said Madame Goesler, rising from her seat. "It is only a trifle. Mr. Finn has asked me to be his wife."

"Well?"

"I could n't refuse Mr. Finn a little thing like that."

"I should think not, after going all the way to Prague to find a latch key! I congratulate you, Mr. Finn, with all my heart."

"Thanks, Duchess."

"And when is it to be?"

"We have not thought about that yet, Mr. Finn,—have we?" said Madame Goesler.

"Adelaide Palliser is going to be married from here some time in the autumn," said the Duchess, "and you two had better take advantage of the occasion." This plan, however, was considered as being too rapid and rash. Marriage is a very serious affair, and many things would require arrangement. A lady with the wealth which belonged to Madame Goesler cannot bestow herself off-handed as may a curate's daughter, let her be ever so willing to give her money as well as herself. It was impossible that a day should be fixed quite at once; but the Duchess was allowed to understand that the affair might be mentioned. Before dinner on that day every one of the guests at Matching Priory knew that the man who had refused to be made Under-Secretary of State had been accepted by that possessor of fabulous wealth who was well known to the world as Madame Goesler of Park Lane. "I am very glad that you did not take office under Mr. Gresham," she said to him when they first met each other again in London. "Of course when I was advising you I could not be sure that this would happen. Now you can bide your time, and if the opportunity offers, you can go to work under better auspices."

CHAPTER XXVII.

CONCLUSION.

THERE remains to us the very easy task of collecting together the ends of the thread of our narrative, and tying them into a simple knot, so that there may be no unravelling. Of Mr. Emilius it has been already said that his good fortune clung to him so far that it was found impossible to connect him with the tragedy of Bolton Row. But he was made to vanish for a certain number of years from the world, and dear little Lizzie Eustace was left a free woman. When last we heard of her she was at Naples, and there was then a rumour that she was about to join her fate to that of Lord George de Bruce Carruthers, with whom pecuniary matters had lately not been going comfortably. Let us hope that the match, should it be a match, may lead to the happiness and respectability of both of them.

As all the world knows, Lord and Lady Chiltern still live at Harrington Hall, and he has been considered to do very well with the Brake country. He still grumbles about Trumpeton Wood, and says that it will take a lifetime to repair the injuries done by Mr. Fothergill; —but then who ever knew a master of hounds who was n't ill-treated by the owners of coverts?

Of Mr. Tom Spooner it can only be said that he is still a bachelor, living with his cousin Ned, and that none of the neighbours expect to see a lady at Spoon

Hall. In one winter, after the period of his misfortune, he became slack about his hunting, and there were rumours that he was carrying out that terrible threat of his as to the crusade which he would go to find a cure for his love. But his cousin took him in hand somewhat sharply, made him travel abroad during the summer, and brought him out the next season, "as fresh as paint," as the members of the Brake hunt declared. It was known to every sportsman in the country that poor Mr. Spooner had been in love; but the affair was allowed to be a mystery, and no one ever spoke to Spooner himself upon the subject. It is probable that he now reaps no slight amount of gratification from his memory of the romance.

The marriage between Gerard Maule and Adelaide Palliser was celebrated with great glory at Matching, and was mentioned in all the leading papers as an alliance in high life. When it became known to Mr. Maule, senior, that this would be so, and that the lady would have a very considerable fortune from the old Duke, he reconciled himself to the marriage altogether, and at once gave way in that matter of Maule Abbey. Nothing, he thought, would be more suitable than that the young people should live at the old family place. So Maule Abbey was fitted up, and Mr. and Mrs. Maule have taken up their residence there. Under the influence of his wife he has promised to attend to his farming, and proposes to do no more than go out and see the hounds when they come into his neighbourhood. Let us hope that he may prosper. Should the farming come to a good end more will probably have been due to his wife's enterprise than to his own. The energetic father is, as all the world knows, now in pursuit

of a widow with three thousand a year who has lately come out in Cavendish Square.

Of poor Lord Fawn no good account can be given. To his thinking official life had none of those drawbacks with which the fantastic feelings of Phineas Finn had invested it. He could have been happy forever at the India Board or at the Colonial Office;—but his life was made a burden to him by the affair of the Bonteen murder. He was charged with having nearly led to the fatal catastrophe of Phineas Finn's condemnation by his erroneous evidence, and he could not bear the accusation. Then came the further affair of Mr. Emilius, and his mind gave way;—and he disappeared. Let us hope that he may return some day with renewed health, and again be of service to his country.

Poetical justice reached Mr. Quintus Slide of the People's Banner. The acquittal and following glories of Phineas Finn were gall and wormwood to him; and he continued his attack upon the member for Tankerville even after it was known that he had refused office, and was about to be married to Madame Goesler. In these attacks he made allusions to Lady Laura which brought Lord Chiltern down upon him, and there was an action for libel. The paper had to pay damages and costs, and the proprietors resolved that Mr. Quintus Slide was too energetic for their purposes. He is now earning his bread in some humble capacity on the staff of the Ballot Box,—which is supposed to be the most democratic daily newspaper published in London. Mr. Slide has, however, expressed his intention of seeking his fortune in New York.

Laurence Fitzgibbon certainly did himself a good turn by his obliging deference to the opinion of the

Chancellor of the Exchequer. He has been in office ever since. It must be acknowledged of all our leading statesmen that gratitude for such services is their characteristic. It is said that he spends much of his eloquence in endeavouring to make his wife believe that the air of County Mayo is the sweetest in the world. Hitherto, since his marriage, this eloquence has been thrown away, for she has always been his companion through the session in London.

It is rumoured that Barrington Erle is to be made Secretary for Ireland, but his friends doubt whether the office will suit him.

The marriage between Marie Goesler and our hero did not take place till October, and then they went abroad for the greater part of the winter, Phineas having received leave of absence officially from the Speaker and unofficially from his constituents. After all that he had gone through it was acknowledged that so much ease should be permitted to him. They went first to Vienna, and then back into Italy, and were unheard of by their English friends for nearly six months. In April they reappeared in London, and the house in Park Lane was opened with great éclat. Of Phineas every one says that of all living men he has been the most fortunate. The present writer will not think so unless he shall soon turn his hand to some useful task. Those who know him best say that he will of course go into office before long.

Of poor Lady Laura hardly a word need be said. She lives at Saulsby the life of a recluse, and the old Earl her father is still alive.

The Duke, as all the world knows, is on the very eve of success with the decimal coinage. But his hair is

becoming grey, and his back is becoming bent; and men say that he will never live as long as his uncle. But then he will have done a great thing,—and his uncle did only little things. Of the Duchess no word need be said. Nothing will ever change the Duchess.

THE END.

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